Universal Message of the Bhagavad Gita

An Exposition of the Gita
in the Light of Modern Thought and Modern Needs

Swami Ranganathananda

Advaita Ashrama

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE OF THE

Bhagavad Gītā

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by

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Advaita Ashrama

(Publication House of Ramakrishna Math)
5 Dehi Entally Road • Kolkata 700 014

Advaita Ashrama

Published by

The Adhyaksha
Advaita Ashrama
P.O. Mayavati, Dt. Champawat
Uttarakhand - 262524, India
from its Publication Department, Kolkata

Email: mail@advaitaashrama.org
Website: www.advaitaashrama.org

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First Print Edition, July 2000
First Ebook Edition, February 2020

ISBN 978-81-7505-236-9 (Hardbound)
ISBN 978-81-7505-933-7 (Ebook)

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Publisher's Preface

We are happy to present before our readers the first volume of a three-volume work, *Universal Message of the Bhagavad Gītā*—a verse by verse exposition of the *Gītā*by Swami Ranganathanandaji, President of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. This commentary was originally given as a series of Sunday discourses, from 1988 to 1990, at the 1200-capacity Vivekananda Hall of the Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad, and it regularly drew an overflow audience consisting of a cross-section of the city population, including many youths.

These lectures, delivered extempore, were recorded, and the audio and video cassettes have reached many homes in various parts of India and abroad. The nature of the subject as well as its treatment by the speaker and his method of delivery, invariably held the attention and sustained the interest and enthusiasm of a large and varied audience. Packed with many stimulating and delightfully refreshing ideas, and drawing upon the works of eminent national and international poets, scientists, authors, and historians, this commentary explains the universal and humanistic teachings of *The Song Celestial*, as Edwin Arnold called the *Gītā*, in the context of modern thought and modern needs. Thus it is bound to keep the readers absorbed from beginning to end. This three-volume work on the *Gītā* also makes a wonderful companion to the Swami's *Message of the Upaniṣads*, published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, now in its seventh edition, which contains an appendix of the Swami's correspondence with the biologist, the late Sir Julian Huxley, on the book.

In transcribing the lectures from the audio cassettes, we have received substantial help from Swami Satyapriyananda of the Ramakrishna Mission, as well as Sanskrit scholar and Vedanta Student, Miss Dana Sugu of Romania whose translations of several Upaniṣads into Romanian have been published in Bucharest. These lectures on the *Gītā*were thoroughly edited by Swami Ranganathanandaji with the help of Swami Satyapriyananda, Brahmachari Saswatachaitanya, and Swami Nischalananda. As Swami Ranganathanandaji is 91 and is in frail health, without their devoted help, the author says, this work could not have come out.

Volume one presents the first four chapters of the *Gītā*. Every effort will be made by Swami Ranganathanandaji and the Publishers, to bring out the second and third volumes expounding the remaining fourteen chapters, in due course.

Guru Purnima
16 July 2000

Publisher

Hints on Transliteration and Pronunciation

In the book, Devanāgarī characters are transliterated according to the scheme adopted by the International Congress of Orientalists at Athens in 1912 and since then generally acknowledged to be the only rational and satisfactory one. In it the inconsistency, irregularity, and redundancy of English spelling are ruled out: f, q, w, x, and z are not called to use; one fixed value is given to each letter. According to this scheme

Sounds like

अ	a	o in s*o*n
आ	ā	a in m*a*ster
इ	i	i in *i*f
ई	ee	in f*ee*l
उ	u	u in f*u*ll
ऊ	ū	oo in b*oo*t
ऋ	ṛ	somewhat between r and ri
ए	e	a in ev*a*d
ऐ	ai	y in m*y*
ओ	o	o in *o*ver
औ	au	ow in n*o*w
क	k	k
ख	kh	ckh in blo*ckh*ead
ग	g	g (hard)
घ	gh	gh in log-*h*ut
ङ	ṅ	ng
च	c	ch (not k)
छ	ch	chh in cat*ch* him
ज	j	j
झ	jh	dgeh in he*dgeh*og
ञ	ñ	n (somewhat)
ट	ṭ	t
ठ	ṭh	th in an*t-h*ill
ड	ḍ	d

ढ	ḍh	dh in go*dh*ood
ण	ṇ	n in u*n*der
त	t	French t
थ	th	th in *th*umb
द	d	d in *th*em
ध	dh	theh in brea*the* here
न	n	n
प	p	p
फ	ph	ph in loo*p-h*ole
ब	b	b
भ	bh	bh in a*bh*or
म	m	m
य	y	
र	r	r
ल	l	l
व	v	v in a*v*ert
श	ś	sh
ष	ṣ	sh in *sh*ow
स	s	s
ह	h	h
ं	ṁ	m in hu*m*
ः	ḥ	half h in hu*h*!

The following points may also be noted:

(1) All Sanskrit words, except when they are proper nouns, or have come into common use in English, or represent a class of literature, cult, sect, or school of thought, are italicized.

(2) Anglicized Sanskrit words like ‘kārmic’, ‘samsāric’, ‘Arhathood’, etc., are romanized.

(3) Current geographical names, except in cases where their Sanskrit forms are given, or in special cases where the context requires it, and all modern names from the commencement of the nineteenth century are given in their usual spelling and without diacritical marks.

INTRODUCTION

The Charm And Power Of The Gītā

We shall begin with a *Śāntipāṭha* or Peace Chant of the Upaniṣads:

Om Sahanāvavatu; sahanaubhunaktu;
Sahavīryam karavāvahai;
Tejasvināvadhītamastu;
Mā vidviṣāvahai;
Om śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ —

'Om, May God protect us (teacher and students) together. May we be nourished together. May we attain vigour together. May we become illumined by this study. May we not hate each other. Om, peace, peace, peace.'

Prefatory Remarks: India's Erstwhile Misunderstanding of the Gītā

We shall commence the study of the *Bhagavad Gītā* this evening. The first three chapters convey the central theme of the philosophy and spirituality of Yoga, which Śrī Kṛṣṇa refers to at the beginning of the fourth chapter. That philosophy is enriched in the remaining fourteen chapters. But the core of his original message has been expounded in chapters two and three. It is a book that is meant to be a help to realize the eternal spiritual reality within all men and women, along with the humanistic objectives which we have in our Constitution and also those which humanity is seeking in the modern age. That is why this *Gītā* message is spreading now in various parts of the world. So far as we are concerned, we have to approach this study in this modern period from a point of view different from our traditional way. In the past, people mostly read the *Gītā* as a pious act, and for a little peace of mind. We never realized that this is a book of intense practicality, that this is the greatest book of practical Vedanta capable of helping us to create a society of fully developed human beings. We never understood the practical application of the *Gītā* teachings. If we had done so, we would not have had the thousand years of foreign

invasions, internal caste conflicts, feudal oppressions, and mass poverty. We never took the *Gītā* seriously; but now we have to. We need a philosophy that can help us to build a new welfare society, based on human dignity, freedom, and equality. That is what we have set before ourselves in modern India, and that is also what is inspiring all the people of the world; and here in the *Gītā* is a philosophy that will train people's minds and hearts in that direction. This orientation, a practical orientation, was given to the *Gītā* for the first time in the modern age by Swami Vivekananda. Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave it several thousand years ago as a practical philosophy, but we converted it into a mere book of piety. When we read the *Gītā Dhyāna Ślokas*—those remarkable verses on '*The Meditation Verses on the Gītā,'* we will find this idea there. The *Gītā* is compared to the milk taken out of the cow, meaning the Vedas, by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the milkman. What is the milk for? It is not meant for worship, but it is meant to be drunk for our nourishment. Then alone can one get strength. But all these hundreds of years, we took that glass of milk, worshipped it with flowers, and saluted it, but never drank it. That is why we are feeble, physically, mentally, and socially. That will change if we now start drinking this milk and assimilate it. That will help us to develop character strength, work efficiency, and a spirit of service, and to forge a new national destiny.

Travelling in various parts of India, I noticed this widespread misunderstanding among our people. But it was forcibly brought to my mind when I was in Hyderabad for a five-day programme of lectures, just after the Police Action in 1949, during my extensive tour of Andhra Pradesh enroute to New Delhi to take charge of the Ramakrishna Mission there. A friend suggested that I pay a visit to General J.N. Chowdhury, the Military Governor of the State. So, I went to meet him along with my friend who was my host there. General Chowdhury received us and did all the talking for the first half-an-hour and I listened. There was Communist insurrection in some parts of the state and he had to attend to the telephone quite often; but the conversation was going on. Then I noticed on his table a copy of the *Gītā.* That gave me an opportunity to do the talking. 'General Chowdhury, do you read the *Gītā?* I see the book on your table,' I asked. In a very tired way he replied, 'Of course, when I feel tired and want to find some peace of mind, I read a few lines from the *Gītā.*' I said firmly, 'That is

not its purpose.' That remark took him by surprise and he asked, 'Do you mean to say that this book has other values than merely giving us a little peace of mind?' 'Yes, that book is not meant merely to give peace of mind; it is meant to give you strength to serve the people, to make you a responsible citizen. It contains a comprehensive philosophy of life and work.' He was amazed and asked me again and again, 'Do you mean to say that this book has a relevance to me as a Military Governor of this State?' I said, 'Exactly so. We must realize that men and women of action, of responsibility, have the need for a philosophy of life and action. The *Gītā* provides that philosophy calling it by the simple word, "Yoga". We never understood it till now. Take the opening verse of the fourth chapter of the *Gītā*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us there: "I gave this philosophy of Yoga to men of responsibility, so that, through this philosophy, they will become strong to serve and protect the people, to nourish the people." This is the purpose of this great book.' I stressed this again and again, and he asked repeatedly, 'Can I, the Governor of this State, learn any lesson from this book to become a more efficient person?' 'Yes, that is the purpose of this book, to inspire all men and women of responsibility to work for the good of all. That is the nature of this book. It is not meant for putting you to sleep. It is meant to wake you up. It is not merely to give you peace of mind. It is to give you that tremendous humanistic impulse and resolve, to work for the good of all in society.'

He was very happy. An hour passed and I asked him, 'Have you read any book of Swami Vivekananda?' 'Yes, I have read some small books of his sayings.' I said, 'That won't do! I want you to read one particular book, his lectures in India known as *Lectures from Colombo to Almora.* These lectures awakened our nation and threw up great patriots who fought for the freedom of our nation. Man-making and nation-building is its theme. I shall send to you from Delhi a copy of it with my autograph, provided you promise to read it. I do not want to waste a book.' 'Yes, I shall read it,' he said. Then I took leave of him. The next day, I went to Delhi and from there I sent him that book, and he wrote to me a nice letter of thanks. Later on, when he was our High Commissioner in Canada, he took my permission to publish, in French, the first lecture *Essence of Indian Culture* from the first

volume of my book *Eternal Values for a Changing Society*, for spreading among the French citizens of Canada, a knowledge of Indian culture.

From this experience I understood that millions of people in India treat the *Gītā* like any of the *stotras* or hymns which we read every morning as a pious act. Today we need a philosophy to guide our footsteps, so that we can meet the challenges of developing the immense manhood and womanhood of India. It is that philosophy and spirituality that we get in the *Gītā*. The message of the *Gītā* was given on the tumultuous battlefield of Kurukṣetra a few thousand years ago. The *Gītā* alone represents such a philosophy. All other teachings were given in a temple, or a cave, or a forest. Here the student and teacher, Arjuna and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, were remarkable personalities; they were warriors. And the teacher, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, was a man full of compassion, and endowed with universal vision. The *Gītā* is thus a heroic message from a heroic teacher to a heroic pupil. Its universality makes it applicable to any human being anywhere in the world, to make him or her realize one's fullest human possibilities. The Upaniṣads or the Vedanta expounded the science of human possibilities a thousand years earlier, and the *Gītā* expounds the practical application of that science. Hence, Swami Vivekananda considered the *Gītā* as the best book of practical Vedanta.

THE FIRST ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE GĪTĀ

The *Gītā* was first translated into English by Sir Charles Wilkins and published by the British East India Company with an Introduction by Warren Hastings, the first British Governor-general of India, in which we find the following prophetic sentence:

'The writers of the Indian philosophies will survive when the British Dominion in India shall long have ceased to exist, and when the sources which it yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance.'

A century later, another beautiful rendering of the *Gītā* in English appeared, namely, *The Song Celestial* by Sir Edwin Arnold (1832–1904). He had learnt the Sanskrit language while he was working in India; in Pune and other places. He developed a great love for Indian culture, and after he went to England, he produced this outstanding book and another equally

outstanding book about Buddha, namely, *The Light of Asia.* Both have gone through more than fifty to sixty editions. Both go straight to the heart of the reader.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* deals with human problems in a human way. That is why it has a tremendous appeal. It has inspired the human mind in India for centuries and centuries, and today, it is inspiring millions of people in various parts of the world. It is interesting to see that in all these countries, after reading the *Gītā,* people find their whole outlook changed. Thinkers and writers like Emerson, Walt Whitman, and Thoreau in U.S.A, and Carlyle in England, experienced this broadening and deepening of their outlook after studying the *Gītā,* and their writings also began to convey a new message.

GREATNESS OF THE GĪTĀREVEALED THROUGH ĀDI ŚAṄKARA

In the modern period, the *Gītā* has the whole world as its empire. In the beginning, it was known only in India, not even in the whole of India, but known only to a few Sanskrit scholars. For the first time, in the 8th century AD, this book was taken out of that mighty epic, *The Mahābhārata,* by Śaṅkarācārya, who wrote a great commentary in Sanskrit on it and placed it before the people. Till then it had been lost in the *Bhīṣma Parva* of the mighty epic. Swami Vivekananda expressed great appreciation for this great work of Śaṅkarācārya. To quote his own words from his lecture on 'Vedanta in All Its Phases' (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. III, p. 328):

'The great glory of Śaṅkarācārya was his preaching of the *Gītā*. It is one of the greatest works that this great man did among the many noble works of his noble life—the preaching of the *Gītā*, and writing the most beautiful commentary upon it. And he has been followed by all founders of the orthodox sects in India, each of whom has written a commentary on the *Gītā*.'

Even then, it was still limited to a few scholars and saints. Later, others wrote commentaries and slowly the book entered into our national languages; *Jñāneśvarī* in Marathi, by the saint Jñāneśvar, a few centuries after Śaṅkarācārya. In the modern period, Lokamanya Tilak wrote his great

book, *The Gītā Rahasya,* in two volumes. He wrote it when the British Government had imprisoned him for a few years in Mandalay jail in Burma. He had no books to consult with, but wrote from his memory. That is a remarkable book; many other books have come out since then, and the *Gītā* today is very popular all over India and in many parts of the world. Many editions in world languages are also coming out; and, as soon as the books are out, they are sold out. So, we are living in an age that indeed is being shaped gently by this great book. Its message is universal, practical, strengthening, and purifying. The great Upaniṣads, which expound a science of human resources, a great science of human possibilities, have found their practical orientation in the *Gītā*. We have to study this book from that point of view, as a science of human development and fulfilment. The metre of the 700 verses is also very simple, the usual metre of eight letters in one line, called *anuṣṭup,* though occasionally we come across longer metres also.

GĪTĀ DHYĀNA ŚLOKAS

The *Gītā* is extremely simple, and many of its ideas are found in the rest of the *Mahābhārata* also. When we had its *Śānti Parva* lectures here in Hyderabad two or three years ago, you may have noticed how many ideas are common between the *Śānti Parva* and the *Gītā*. This is a development that took place after the Vedic period; it is an attempt to work out the practical implications of the philosophy of the Upaniṣads to human problems. For that, this great teacher, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, came, who was himself very practical. He lived a life of intense activity, had a universal heart and mind, and gave this philosophy of Vedanta in that practical form through the *Bhagavad Gītā.* We shall study this book verse by verse. There are 700 verses in its 18 chapters, full of beautiful ideas, so relevant to the times in which we are living. It does not give you a few dogmas, which you are not allowed to question. It invites all to question its teachings and then only follow them. Śrī Kṛṣṇa expounds his original philosophy of life for all people who are at work. Generally, before commencing the study of the text, we study what are called *Gītā Dhyāna Ślokas,* 'the nine Meditation Verses on the *Gītā*.' They are current all over India, and now, in foreign countries also. We don't know who composed them. Some people believe it

was Śridhara Swami, a commentator on the *Gītā* and on the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* who lived about three or four centuries ago. The *Gītā Dhyāna Ślokas* refer to the *Gītā,* to Vyāsa, the author of the *Mahābhārata,* and to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

So, today I shall share with you these wonderful verses giving the English meaning of the original text. They begin with a statement about the *Gītā*:

Om Pārthāya pratibodhitām bhagavatā nārāyaṇena svayam
vyāsena grathitām purāṇa muninā madhye mahābhāratam;
Advaitāmṛtavarṣiṇīm bhagavatīm aṣṭādaśādhyāyinīm
amba tvām anusandadhāmi bhagavadgīte bhavadveṣiṇīm — 1.

'Om! O *Bhagavad Gītā,* with which Pārtha (Arjuna) was enlightened by the Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself and which was incorporated in the *Mahābhārata* by the ancient sage Vyāsa,—the Blessed Mother, the destroyer of rebirth, showering down the nectar of Advaita (philosophy of non-duality), and consisting of eighteen chapters—upon Thee, O *Bhagavad Gītā!* O loving Mother! I constantly meditate.'

That is the first verse, which addresses the *Gītā* as Mother. Mahatma Gandhi has said '*Gītā* has been my mother. I lost my mother when I was young, but I never felt the absence of a mother because I had the *Gītā* with me.' Here is the second verse:

Namo'stu te vyāsa viśāla-buddheḥ
phullāravindāyata-patra-netra;
Yena tvayā bhārata-taila-pūrṇaḥ
prajvālito jñānamayaḥ pradīpaḥ — 2.

'Salutation to Thee, O Vyāsa, of mighty intellect and with eyes large like the petals of full-blown lotus, by whom was lit the lamp of wisdom, full of the *Mahābhārata* oil.'

Prapanna pārijātāya totra-vetraika-pāṇaye;
Jñāna-mudrāya kṛṣṇāya Gītāmṛta-duhe namaḥ — 3.

'Salutation to Kṛṣṇa, with (the right hand held in) *Jñāna mudrā,* the granter of desires of those who take refuge in Him, the milker of the *Gītā* nectar, in whose one hand is the cane for driving the cows.'

SIGNIFICANCE OF JÑĀNA-MUDRĀ

The verse describes Śrī Kṛṣṇa with his right hand held in *Jñāna mudrā.* This is a remarkable concept in Indian Vedantic philosophy and spirituality. It holds that there is a deep significance for this particular *Jñāna mudrā,* knowledge pose, when the thumb is opposed to the forefinger and all the three fingers are stretched out. Our body postures have psychological counterparts; as the mind is, so is the body. You are lying down in a particular way; that will show a certain state of your mind. You sit in a particular way; you will find your psyche manifesting in that posture in a particular way. Suppose one constantly shakes one's legs while sitting, that shows a scattered mental state. In all these matters, the body shows the effect of the psyche. So, from that point of view, *Jñāna mudrā* is a remarkable sign of some profound psychic expression. The very name shows that, that *mudrā* represents *Jñāna,* knowledge—knowledge of every type; from the ordinary or secular knowledge to the highest spiritual knowledge. We, in India, never made any wide distinction between secular knowledge and sacred knowledge. To us all knowledge is sacred. Remember that there is only one Goddess, Sarasvatī, who represents all knowledge and techniques. Unity of all knowledge is a profound idea in our Indian tradition. We may create different departments of knowledge for purposes of study; but we should not break up the unity of knowledge. That is our teaching in India. So we have this idea that knowledge is the greatest thing to be sought after—*Vidyā dhanam sarvadhana pradhānam*, 'the wealth of knowledge is supreme among all forms of wealth'. There is nothing in this world so purifying as knowledge, says the *Gītā* (4: 38): '*Nahi jñānena sadṛśam pavitram iha vidyate*'. That is the motto of one of our universities, namely, the Mysore University.

A human being is human because he has the organic capacity to seek knowledge; no animal can seek knowledge. Animals have only an instinctual apparatus within, and are completely controlled by the genetic system. The human being, however, has been put on the road of making research into the world of knowledge. That world of knowledge may be secular or spiritual, but all knowledge is sacred to us in India. We start with the secular, and continue the search to the spiritual.

Now, how to represent this search for knowledge through a particular posture? Our ancient sages discovered this wonderful *mudrā* which can describe the entire gamut of this search for knowledge; that is something extraordinary. I used to wonder about it. Later on, some years ago, when I studied biology, neurology, and allied subjects, I found one wonderful truth and that is, no animal, not even a chimpanzee, can oppose the thumb to the forefinger, but only the human child can do this. While in Holland, I saw in a film on chimpanzee's behaviour; a chimpanzee holding a branch from a tree with his palm enclosing all the fingers, and beating it on the ground to drive an enemy. When you hold a branch like that, the grip has no strength, and one cannot impart energy to the use of that branch until the thumb comes prominently into operation. In all animals, the thumb does not know how to co-operate with the other fingers, particularly with the forefinger.

However, at the human level of evolution, for the first time, the human being learned to oppose the thumb to the forefinger. That is the beginning of humanity's technical efficiency, his or her capacity to handle tools, his capacity to manipulate the world around him, and acquire knowledge. The human being entered into the world of *jñāna* or knowledge, with this initial physical capacity. That is why this opposing of the thumb to the forefinger is highly symbolic of man's search for knowledge from the most ordinary to the most extraordinary levels. I found this perfectly valid from the scientific point of view. Then I also found that the number of brain cells needed to manipulate these two fingers is the largest compared to all other fingers. If the thumb is cut off, the manipulating efficiency of the hand will suffer automatically. In the *Mahābhārata,* we read of Droṇa, the teacher of archery, asking Ekalavya to cut off his thumb and offer it to him as his guru-dakśiṇa or offering to the guru, so that he does not successfully compete with his favourite student, Arjuna; and Ekalavya obeyed that command of Droṇa whom he respected as his own teacher. The British rulers of India are said to have cut off the thumbs of our Dacca weavers, who wove fine Dacca muslin, so that they may not compete with their own Lancashire weavers.

The importance of the thumb and the capacity to oppose it to the forefinger, is the beginning of man's march to knowledge, secular and spiritual. There is no distinction between secular and spiritual so far as

knowledge is concerned; all knowledge is sacred. On the Sarasvatī Pūjā day, you find all instruments of knowledge placed before Sarasvatī. In my childhood, every year, I used to join the worship of Sarasvatī in my home. I saw carpenters' tools, doctors' medical instruments, and all types of holy books being kept before Sarasvatī, also called *Vāṇī,* 'speech'. She represents the unity of all knowledge. She is a wonderful, austere goddess, so inspiring to the human mind. So long as we worshipped Sarasvatī in the true spirit, our land was devoted to knowledge. But when we left Sarasvatī, and ran after Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth, both Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, both wealth and knowledge, vanished from India. Today we have to bring both of them back to our country, first Sarasvatī, then Lakṣmī. Lakṣmī is the product of Sarasvatī.

The more knowledge you have, the more wealth you can create; except through efficient work inspired by knowledge, there is no other way to gain wealth. You cannot create wealth by magic and mystery. That lesson we have to learn today. Sarasvatī is primary, and Lakṣmī is a by-product of Sarasvatī. This knowledge must come so that poverty will be eliminated in India. Pure science is Sarasvatī, and applied science is Lakṣmī. Knowledge applied to agriculture improves the wealth of the nation; so also industry. Everywhere these two austere goddesses reign, but we in India have to re-learn how to truly worship them. Merely making *ārati*, waving of light, before their picture is not the way to worship them. Go to the university, study various books, think for yourself—that is how you become students of Sarasvatī. And, hard work, teamwork, trying to improve efficiency—that is how we have to worship Lakṣmī. *ārati* we can do once a year, but everyday we have to worship Lakṣmī only through this kind of hard work. Then alone Lakṣmī *kaṭākṣa* or grace will come to us.

Therefore, in this modern age, the ideal is *jñāna,* and everyone is to be on the road to knowledge. Nature has given human being the capacity to oppose the thumb to the forefinger, and thus manipulate the world around him or her, and acquire knowledge and power. This is the beginning of human evolution. In the description of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, this wonderful expression is there; *jñāna mudrāya kṛṣṇāya.* In all the iconography of India, of great saints, sages, incarnations, and of the Divine Mother, you will find this particular pose of *jñāna mudrā.* It is especially seen in depicting Śiva as

Dakṣiṇāmūrti. By this *jñāna mudrā,* he is able to remove the doubts of students around him. This is the tradition coming down to us from very ancient times and we should apply the essence of this tradition to deal with our own present-day problems. The whole land must become dedicated to knowledge and knowledge-seeking.

Meaning and Significance of Tapas

The Western people showed tremendous love for knowledge by which they created modern civilization. Hours and hours of research, no time for going to clubs, no time even for regular eating and drinking, that is the type of work people did for two centuries out of which have come the great modern scientific knowledge, technique, and wealth. We had the same tendency in India ages ago, tremendous love for knowledge. A man in the south hears that there is a teacher in far away Benares; and he starts walking to Benares—'I must study under that teacher'. Students walked from other parts of India to Taxila in West Punjab (now in Pakistan) to study medicine and surgery from reputed teachers like Caraka and ṣuṣruta. Wherever there is real love for knowledge, nobody will mind a little inconvenience on the way. Knowledge-seeking is a *tapas,* austerity. Without *tapas* there is no knowledge. *Tapas* and knowledge go together. *Bahavo jñāna-tapasā pūtā,* Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say later on in the *Gītā*(4. 10), 'many purified in the *tapas* of *jñāna*'. If our whole nation becomes inspired by the concept of *jñāna-tapas,* there will be tremendous advances in our national life. Without *tapas,* merely sitting in an easy chair, you are not going to get any knowledge. You have to pay for it by effort and struggle, that is called *tapas*. *Tapas* is a great word in our culture. It occurs often in the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*. Quoting a verse from the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti,* Śaṅkarācārya defines this wonderful word in his commentary on the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* statement: *tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva,* 'realize Brahman through *tapas*'; *manasaśca indriyāṇām ca aikāgryam tapa ucyate,* 'the concentration of the energies of the mind and the sense organs is called *tapas*', and that definition you can give to any and every search for knowledge in this world. That is what the scientists do—they train their minds in scientific methods and attitudes; with that they are able to penetrate into the heart of nature and lay bare the truths zealously guarded by nature for ages and ages. So also, the Atman is

hidden in this world of *Māyā*. Our Vedic sages penetrated this *Māyā* and discovered the infinite and immortal reality, the Atman, behind this ever-changing world of *Māyā.*

All our students must keep before themselves this definition of *tapas* before they enter a school or college. At a school or college or university, one cannot get knowledge without a good deal of serious effort. If you take away *tapas,* knowledge-seeking becomes cheap and that is what has happened to our education today; when you go to knowledge-seeking centres like universities, you do not find the *tapas* attitude and atmosphere; everything is easy-going, except for a few, who still keep the fire of *tapas* burning all the time. *Tapas* and *svādhyāya* go together in our culture. *Svādhyāya* means study. The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki begins with the words: *tapaḥ svādhyāya niratam nāradam,* 'Nārada who was constantly engaged in *tapas* and *svādhyāya.*' So, this is the concept of *jñāna-mudrā* behind which lie *tapas* and *svādhyāya.* So, the verse says *jñānamudrāya kṛṣṇāya,* '(we salute) Kṛṣṇa who has this *jñāna-mudrā';* and the verse further says *Gītāmṛta duhe,* 'who has milked the nectar of the *Gītā* (from the cow of the Upaniṣads).' That latter description will come fully in the next verse. *Duhe* in Sanskrit means one who milks a cow; *dugdham* means milk; *duhitā* means daughter who used to milk the cows in ancient *āryan* households. From that Sanskrit word comes the Russian or Slav word 'doch' for daughter, 'tochter' in German and daughter in English.

Sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopālanandanaḥ;
Pārtho vatsaḥ sudhīḥ bhoktā dugdham Gītāmṛtam mahat— 4.

'All the Upaniṣads are the cow; the milkman is the cowherd boy (Śrī Kṛṣṇa); Pārtha, or Arjuna, is the calf; men and women of purified intellect are the drinkers; and the supreme nectar, *Gītā,* is the milk.'

This is a famous verse popular all over India. The *Gītā* is described as the essence of the Upaniṣads. Then comes a tribute to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the next verse:

Vasudeva sutam devam kamsa-cāṇūra-mardanam;
Devakī-paramānandam Kṛṣṇam vande jagad-gurum — 5.

‘The divine son of Vasudeva, the destroyer of (the evil doers) Kamsa and Cāṇūra, the supreme bliss of (mother) Devakī — I salute that Kṛṣṇa, the guru of the world.’

Śrī Kṛṣṇa did not come to the earth to teach an ethnic group or nation or race. He came for all humanity, and that is what the verse says *Kṛṣṇam vande jagad-gurum*. The next verse is a big one, full of imageries:

Bhīṣmadroṇa-taṭā jayadrathajalā gāndhāranīlotpalā
śalyagrāhavatī kṛpeṇa vahanī karṇena velākulā;
Aśvatthāma-vikarṇa-ghoramakarā duryodhanāvartinī
sottīrṇā khalu pāṇḍavai raṇanadī kaivartakaḥ keśavaḥ — 6.

‘The battle river, with Bhīṣma and Droṇa as its banks, Jayadratha as its waters, the king of Gāndhāra as the blue water lilies, Śalya as the shark, Kṛpa as its current, Karṇa as its breakers, Aśvatthāmā and Vikarṇa as its terrible crocodiles, and Duryodhana as the whirlpool in it — was indeed crossed over by the Pāṇḍavas, with Keśava (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) as the ferry-man.’

Then comes the next verse:

Pārāśaryavacaḥsarojamamalam Gītārthagandhotkaṭam
nānākhyānakakesaram harikathāsambodhanābodhitam;
Loke sajjanaṣaṭpadaiḥ aharahaḥ pepīyamānam mudā
bhūyāt bhāratapaṅkajam kalimalapradhvamsi naḥ śreyase—7.

‘May the taintless lotus of the *Mahābhārata,* growing on the waters of the words of Parāśara’s son (Vyāsa), having the *Gītā* as its strong sweet fragrance, with many a narrative as its stamens, fully opened by the discourses on Hari (the Supreme Divinity), and drunk joyously day after day by the bees of the good and the pure in the world—be productive of the supreme good to him or her who is eager to destroy the taint of *Kali Yuga* (evil age).’

The next verse is about Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s grace. It is also a very famous verse:

Mūkam karoti vācālam paṅgum laṅghayate girim;
Yatkṛpā tamaham vande paramānandamādhavam — 8.

‘I salute that all-blissful Mādhava (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) whose grace makes the dumb eloquent and the cripple cross mountains.’

Many saints and sages in India have used this verse again and again to express the power of Divine Grace. Sri Ramakrishna tells us that divine grace is like the wind that is blowing all the time, only your boat is not going onward because you have not unfurled your sails. Unfurl your sails, then you will catch the wind and move forward. That much work we have to do to experience grace.

Next comes the last verse, often recited by our people:

Yam brahmā varuṇendrarudramarutaḥ stunvanti divyai stavaiḥ
vedaiḥ sāṅgapadakramopaniṣadaiḥ gāyanti yam sāmagāḥ;
Dhyānāvasthitatadgatena manasā paśyanti yam yogino
yasyāntam na viduḥ surāsuragaṇā devāya tasmai namaḥ—9.

'Salutation to that Divine Being whom Brahma, Varuṇa, Indra, Rudra, and the Maruts praise with divine hymns, Whom the singers of *Sāma* sing by the Vedas, with their full complement of parts, consecutive sections, and Upaniṣads, Whom the yogīs see with their minds absorbed in Him through perfection in meditation, and Whose limit the hosts of *Devas* and *Asuras* know not.'

ĀDI ŚAṄKARĀCĀRYA'S INTRODUCTION TO HIS GĪTĀ COMMENTARY

It was Śaṅkarācārya, as I have said earlier, who discovered the importance of the Gītā and preached it to the people by writing a commentary on it. He lived between 788 and 820 AD. He was an extraordinary creative personality who embodied in his person the full spirit of Indian Culture and philosophy and spirituality. He travelled on foot from south to north and from west to east of India, and wrote many scholarly and popular Vedantic books, and put his stamp on the spiritual and cultural unity of India. And, all this he did in his brief life of 32 years.

We shall study the major part of his two-page Introduction to his *Gītā* sloka-in-eng-last-line, which expounds a comprehensive view of human development. I wish every reader who loves the *Gītā* studies this two-page Introduction and appreciates it, impressed by its universality. The *Gītā* does not cut up life into the secular and the sacred, but takes a unified view of human life and human destiny. We shall therefore study the more important portion of this Introduction today.

In his Introduction, Śaṅkara first quotes a *Paurāṇic* verse, whose echo is found in modern western cosmology in part, dealing with the nature of the Divine:

Nārāyaṇaḥ paro avyaktāt aṇḍamavyaktasambhavam;
Aṇḍasyāntastvime lokāḥ saptadvīpā ca medinī —

'Nārāyaṇa (the Supreme Divine Being) is beyond the *avyakta* (undifferentiated Nature), the Cosmic Egg has come out of the *avyakta;* within the Cosmic Egg are these universes including the earth with its seven island-continents.'

India's cosmology, not only very similar in some respects to modern Western astronomy, but also richer than it, finds expression in this verse; except that India treats the sacred source of the universe as spiritual whereas modern Western astronomy treats it as material, though some Western cosmologists like Fred Hoyle of England are trying to transform it into the spiritual. Fred Hoyle had written a book on cosmology over forty years ago which was fully materialistic. Now he has written a new book where the very title has a spiritual orientation: *The Intelligent Universe.* The universe is intelligent; it is the same as what Vedanta calls it—Infinite, non-dual Consciousness.

So here we have in this first verse, Nārāyaṇa, which has no corresponding concept in Western astronomy; but the next stage, *avyakta,* the undifferentiated state, can find its equivalent in modern Western astronomy as the state of singularity. Nārāyaṇa, that supreme Divine Personality, is invoked as beyond the undifferentiated nature. Nature, Vedanta says, has two dimensions, the differentiated and the undifferentiated. Differentiated is what you see as this manifested universe; and behind it, there is the *avyakta,* i.e., Nature in its undifferentiated state, the state just before the Big Bang of Western astronomy. From the *avyakta* comes the *vyakta,* the manifested, what the verse calls the *Brahmāṇḍa,* the Cosmic Egg, containing these millions of universes, including the earth with its seven continents. God, the Supreme Primordial Reality, is called *ananta koṭi brahmāṇḍa nāyaka*, 'the Master of millions of universes' by Vedanta. India had the vision of infinite time and space, unlike the very limited view of time and space of Semitic thought, but similar to modern

Western astronomical views. Vedanta says that the whole *Brahmāṇḍa* has come from Brahman, exists in Brahman, and gets dissolved into Brahman at the end of a cosmic cycle; and it has come from Brahman in a particularly orderly fashion, from an undifferentiated state to a differentiated state; and this differentiation follows a certain evolutionary sequence; cosmic evolution, organic evolution, human—ethical, moral, and spiritual—evolution. That is the language used in Vedantic cosmology. As the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* sings (*Mahābhārata, Anuśāsana Parva*):

Yataḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni bhavanti ādi yugāgame;
Yasminśca pralayam yānti punareva yugakṣaye —

'From where all the beings come out at the beginning of a Yuga, or Cosmic Cycle, and in which all are dissolved at the end of a Yuga'—that is Nārāyaṇa.

The Divine Nārāyaṇa is the personal aspect of the Impersonal-Personal Brahman, which is of the nature of Infinite Pure Consciousness, one and non-dual.

Two Paths of Human Life: *Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti*

Having said this, Śaṅkara gives a comprehensive philosophy of life at the human stage of evolution with a view to making human society move on an even keel:

Sa bhagavān sṛṣṭvedam jagat, tasya ca sthitim cikīrṣuḥ, marīcyādīn agre śṛṣṭvā prajāpatīn, pravṛttilakṣaṇam dharmam grāhayāmāsa vedoktam—

'That Blessed Lord, having projected this universe (from within Himself), desirous of its maintenance in good order, projecting *Prajāpatis* like Marīci and others, in the beginning, imparted to them the Vedic message of *pravṛtti* or action.'

Tataḥ anyān ca sanaksanandanādīn utpādya, nivṛttilakṣaṇam dharmam jñānavairāgyalakṣaṇam grāhayāmāsa—

'And, projecting also others like Sanaka, Sanandana, and (Sanātana and Sanatkumār), imparted to them the philosophy characterized by *nivṛtti* or

inward meditation, characterized by spiritual knowledge and renunciation.'

Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana, and Sanatkumāra are called the four *Kumāras,* Eternal Children of the Spirit, who are honoured in Indian literature as children of the Supreme Divine, untouched by worldliness.

> *Dvividho hi vedokto dharmaḥ—pravṛttilakṣaṇo, nivṛttilakṣaṇaśca, jagataḥ sthitikāraṇam. Prāṇinām sākṣāt-abhyudaya-niḥśreyasa-hetuḥ —*

'The *dharma* or philosophy taught in the Vedas is of a two-fold nature, characterized by *pravṛtti,* outward action, and *nivṛtti,* inward contemplation, meant for the even stability of the world, which are meant to ensure the true *abhyudaya,* socio-economic welfare, and *niḥśreyasa,* spiritual freedom, of all beings.'

Both action and meditation are needed for human wellbeing; if only one or the other is there, there will be no health, individual or social. See the wonderful insight, the comprehensive wisdom of the ancient Indian sages! Through *pravṛtti* you establish a welfare society through the improvement of your economy and the political system. Through *nivṛtti* you achieve, what we call today, a value-oriented life that comes from humanity's inner spiritual dimension. Otherwise, plenty of wealth, power, and everything else you may have through *pravṛtti,* but with only *pravṛtti* and no *nivṛtti,* society will be all right in the short run, but in the long run, it will be in trouble. The whole of modern Western civilization today is in trouble because there is no emphasis on *nivṛtti,* there is emphasis only on *pravṛtti*—work, work, and work; earn more and more money, but remain inwardly poorer and poorer, until one becomes a nervous wreck. Many people are suffering thus in the modern world. I often quote the German philosopher Schopenhauer from his book, *The World as Will and Idea;* mind you, he told this about 130 years ago and what he said then is absolutely true today. He said: 'When men achieve security and welfare, now that they have solved all other problems, they become a problem to themselves.'

How literally true is this for men and women in this modern age! Even in our own country, there is the endless pursuit of money, power, and pleasure; and the result is the creation of widespread value erosion and

increasing violence. That is not the way to maintain a healthy human society. The second element, *nivṛtti,* is lacking. So Śaṅkara says *Prāṇinām sākṣāt abhyudaya-niḥśreyasa-hetuḥ,* 'a philosophy of life which integrates social welfare and spiritual freedom', through action and meditation. There is one point to be mentioned in this context. *Udaya* after *abhi* means welfare; *abhi* means together, not alone; it is an important prefix added to this particular expression; that means, that no socio-economic development can come without co-operative endeavour; there is need for co-ordination, team spirit, to create a healthy society. If each one fights against the other, there will be no prosperity. Social peace is absolutely essential, co-operation is essential, teamwork is essential; all that is emphasized by that one word *abhi.* That is the one value which we have not assimilated enough in our society in India in recent centuries. Today we have to learn that lesson; we have to develop public spirit. All our villages can become heavens tomorrow, if our people know how to work together. We have not learnt it yet, and so our co-operative societies often fail. If there is no co-operative spirit, how can we make a success of our co-operative movement?

TWO FRUITS OF THESE PATHS: *ABHYUDAYA AND NIḤŚREYASA*

Thus the word *abhi* added to *udaya* is very important; it emphasizes togetherness. We have to learn how to deal with our neighbours in our villages; let me make peace with them and we shall together improve our villages: improvement of sanitation, good roads, better housing, and all people properly fed and educated—all these we can achieve only by working together. That is the way to make our Pañcāyats and municipalities healthy. That is the way we can bring a new healthy India to life. So, this philosophy of *abhyudaya* is important; the West has achieved it to a large extent; and we can learn from the West how to work it out in our country. Three values we have to bring into our life and work: hard work, efficient work, and co-operative work. Śaṅkarācārya says that this Vedic philosophy, with its twofold ideology of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti,* makes for the *abhyudaya* of men and women on the one side, and *niḥśreyasa* on the other. This is what we speak of concerning a full welfare state today; there is nothing utopian about it; many societies have achieved *abhyudaya* today; and we also can achieve it in India, provided we develop what is called character efficiency.

As Jesus said, 'if you cannot love Me whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have not seen?' Our people must learn that one great lesson. We have been most interested in relating ourselves to a far away God, or to an image of God in a temple, than to the man in our neighbourhood, with whom we more often pick up a quarrel. This has to change, and that change is what brings about *abhyudaya.* Then comes *niḥśreyasa.* You may achieve all the comforts of life—house, education, clean surroundings, economic strength, and varieties of pleasures. Yet there will be no peace of mind; life will be full of tension. Why? Because you have missed one thing; you have not known your true Self, the spark of innate divinity; your centre of gravity is always outside. You miss your true dignity and have become a slave of things. Out of that comes inner tensions; crime and delinquency increase in society and slowly decay sets in.

This can be avoided when we add that second value to human life, namely, *nivṛtti,* meditation, through which one comes in touch with the ever-present Divine within. This is not a dogma or mere belief, but a truth realized through the science of spirituality by the sages of the Upaniṣads; a truth to be realized by every one and not just believed in. And the more inward you go, the more you become capable of penetrating into other human beings, establishing happy relations with them. When you go deeper into your inner nature, you go beyond the tiny ego controlled by the genetic system, and come in contact with the larger Self which is the Self of all.

Thus, this combination of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti,* of *abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa,* is the great teaching of the *Gītā.* It contains a philosophy to make for total human development. That is the speciality of this great book. So, Śaṅkarācārya said, '*Prāṇinām sākṣāt abhyudaya niḥśreyasa hetuḥ*'. He did not say that it is only for Hindus, or only for the people of India, but *prāṇinām,* 'for all human beings'. That is its universality. By adding *niḥśreyasa* to *abhyudaya,* the *Gītā* prevents human beings from becoming reduced to mere machines. In modern Western civilization there is that tendency. Bertrand Russell says in his book *Impact of Science on Society,* that if this mechanization of men and women goes too far, the time will come when a workman will go to the factory, with a flower in his hand and placing it before a huge machine, will pray: 'O machine, make me a good

nut and bolt in your system!' That is called mechanization of man. If the second value emphasized by Śaṅkarācārya, namely, *niḥśreyasa,* is given due attention, spiritual values will manifest and then such a problem will never arise. *Abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa* together constitute the means for the maintenance of this world on an even keel. Stress one and neglect the other, it will tilt to one side or the other, like a boat. India in recent centuries tilted to *niḥśreyasa* side, and that too not properly, and neglected *abhyudaya* side and suffered stagnation from which it is being rescued in the modern period by teachers like Swami Vivekananda; while the modern West tilted to *abhyudaya* side from which it is now hankering to be rescued. The West had experience of *nivṛtti* in the Christian ideas of meditation which had produced great mystics and saints, but which has become obsolete in the modern age; modern Western civilization is based entirely on *pravṛtti* till now. But today there is a reaction in the West against this one-sided approach to life; that is amazing as it comes from some thinkers, psychologists, and nuclear scientists, when they see that this one-sided attitude is producing one-sided people and a one-sided civilization. Something else is needed; that feeling has begun to make its appearance after all these 200 years of cultural experiment in America; some thinkers have come now to the conclusion that there must be a stress on *nivṛtti* also. How does it express itself in American thought?

Vedanta recognizes a super-conscious level of cognition, besides the conscious, the pre-conscious, the sub-conscious, and the unconscious. *Nivṛtti* refers to that super-conscious level with respect to human creativity. This is also hinted at in the recent studies of cognition with reference to human creativity by several Western psychologists.

When I was in Washington D.C., during my eight-month lecture tour of America in 1971–72, I came across a book, a very bulky book: *American Handbook of Psychiatry,* vol. III, by several authors. To enhance creativity, American youth at one time resorted to various forms of drug abuse; this book protests against it and provides a healthy procedure. In his studies of *Creativity and Its Cultivation,* Sylvano Ariety says (pp. 737–40):

'Instead of resorting to toxic procedures, we must consider, and possibly recommend, special attitudes, habits, and environmental conditions. The

first condition to be considered is *aloneness.* Aloneness may be viewed as a partial sensory deprivation. … He has more possibility of listening to his inner self, to come in contact with his inner resources and with some manifestations of the primary process. (Modern Western psychology speaks of the knowledge derived from the pre-conscious state, or the non-logical type of knowledge, as primary cognition, and that derived from the conscious state or the logical type of knowledge, as secondary cognition.) Unfortunately, aloneness is not advocated in our modern forms of educating adolescents. On the contrary, gregariousness and popularity are held in high esteem.

'Aloneness should not be confused with painful loneliness or with withdrawal or constant solitude. …

'A second characteristic, which seems to promote creativity, is one which is contrary to the present spirit of American culture: *Inactivity*...

'The third characteristic is *daydreaming*.… It is in daydream life that the individual permits himself to diverge from the usual ways, and to make little excursions into irrational worlds.

'Another requirement for the creative person is even more difficult to accept: *gullibility.* This word is used here to mean the willingness to accept, at least temporarily or until proved wrong, that there are certain underlying orderly arrangements in everything outside us and inside us. Creativity often implies the discovery of these underlying arrangements, more than the inventing of new things.…

'*Alertness and discipline* are other requirements. Although they are necessary pre-requisites for productivity in general, they acquire a particular aspect in creativity.'

These are some prescriptions by Sylvano Arieti; and one of the prescriptions is most revolutionary: you must develop the capacity for gullibility; believe what people say, don't disbelieve. Today, there is a tendency to disbelieve everything, which has gone too far, say the authors. You must have a certain capacity to believe until a thing is proved false. Little children are creative because they believe, but grown-ups have lost the power to believe. When the capacity to believe disappears, and

generally it happens due to one-sided development, you slowly develop a cynical attitude. Disbelieving everything is the prevailing disease of many human minds all over the world. One extreme is cynicism, which is to be tackled with the other extreme of gullibility. Then a balanced attitude will develop, says that book.

All creativity is destroyed by the cynical attitude. I think it was Byron, the British poet, who said that there was not a single chaste woman in the whole of England except two, namely, Queen Victoria and his own mother. Then he added that he included Queen Victoria because, otherwise, he would be punished, and he included his mother because he would be a bastard otherwise!

That kind of judgement comes from a deep-rooted negativity of mind. We find in many intellectuals in present-day India such a cynical attitude. We find a good deal of it also in some of our journalists and other media people. That basic faith in truth, in man, in his or her destiny, has been eroded. When the science of spirituality asks you to sit quiet and meditate, it is asking you to be alone and not to rub shoulders all the time with others. Rubbing shoulders will also rub the nerves. Learn to enjoy being alone occasionally. All these come under this ancient Vedantic teaching of *nivṛtti. Pravṛtti* need not be taught, because we are naturally *pravṛtti*-prone. A child jumps up, runs about, engages in pushing and pulling things; so *pravṛtti* is natural. But *nivṛtti* needs training. That is what humanity is seeking today. What a psychological depth-knowledge it reveals!

This message, the blessing of *nivṛtti,* is slowly percolating into the Western mind, through not only influences going from India, but also from China and Japan, and from their own writers, thinkers, and psychologists, reacting wisely to their one-sided cultural situation. By *pravṛtti,* you achieve social welfare—good houses, plenty to eat and drink, good dress, education, lighted streets, and good roads; but too much of it is called consumerism today. For being peaceful, harmonious, fulfilled, and for the development of capacity to love people and to live in peace with them, we need the blessing of *nivṛtti,* which helps to manifest the spiritual energy that is within all in the form of the inherent divine spark. And, that *nivṛtti* can inspire all our *pravṛtti* also. That is what is taught in the *Gītā; nivṛtti*

inspiring *pravṛtti.* We have plenty of *pravṛtti* in India; just now we have had our elections, and what an amount of *pravṛtti* we witnessed—full of violent thinking, violent actions, somebody snatching away the ballot boxes and many such things. Why do we do so? Because there is so little *nivṛtti* to stabilize and purify our thinking today. We should think and ask ourselves, 'Why should we do this? Is it good for our democracy?' We have to give our people the freedom to vote as *they* like; why should any political party control or interfere with it? We have all these distractions in our politics, and much corruption along with it. But a touch of *nivṛtti* can change all this.

The *Gītā* is going to tell us about that kind of life where there will be tremendous efficiency, great productivity, and better inter-human relations. Mark the comprehensiveness of this approach of the *Gītā* to human life and destiny! Śaṅkarācārya is giving us in a nutshell this comprehensive spirituality of the *Gītā*. It says that every human being is spiritual, even when he or she is in the *pravṛtti* field of life; one is never outside spirituality. That is a wonderful idea. Spirituality is life encompassing, you are never outside of spirituality. That is the attitude of the *Gītā* and the Vedanta. That is why I like this second sentence of his sloka-in-eng-last-line, beginning with '*Dvividho hi vedokto dharmaḥ*'. We never understood this truth these several centuries; we had diluted our religion and philosophy until in the last century our religion became like the milk in our erstwhile market—90% water and 10% milk!

We have to build up our whole nation on this profound unifying philosophy. That is why Swami Vivekananda is remembered as one who raised the banner of this comprehensive philosophy and spirituality of Vedanta very high in the modern period. It is rational, practical, universal, and humanism-oriented. Raise that banner once again. He exhorted the nation in his Lahore lecture on Vedanta in 1897 (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. III, 1960 edition, pp. 430–31):

'Therefore, young men of Lahore, raise once more that mighty banner of Advaita, for on no other ground can you have that wonderful love, until "you see that the same Lord is present everywhere." Unfurl that banner of love! "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached." Arise, arise once more, for nothing can be done without renunciation. If you want to help

others, your little self must go. The nation is sinking; the curse of unnumbered millions is on our heads—those to whom we have been giving ditch-water to drink when they have been dying of thirst and while the perennial river of water was flowing past, the unnumbered millions whom we have allowed to starve in sight of plenty, the unnumbered millions to whom we have talked of Advaita and whom we have hated with all our strength. Wipe off this blot. Arise and awake and be perfectly sincere. Our insincerity in India is awful. What we want is character, that steadiness and character that make a man cling on to a thing like grim death.'

Today we get that lion roar of Vedanta with a tremendous modern relevance in the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda as Practical Vedanta.

By saying '*Prāṇinām sākṣāt-abhyudaya-niḥśreyasa-hetuḥ',* Śaṅkara stresses that Vedanta or *Sanātana Dharma* works for the happiness and welfare of all beings, including animals, unlike some religions and some political systems which will look after only one's own followers.

Then Śaṅkara continues:

Yaḥ sa dharmaḥ brāhmaṇādyaiḥ varṇibhiḥ āśramibhiḥ ca śreyo'rthibhiḥ anuṣṭhīyamānaḥ dīrgheṇa kālena—

'this twofold dharma was practised for long ages by all sections of people, desirous of spiritual welfare, like brāhmaṇas and members of other three varṇas and members of the four āśramas'.

Evils Arising from the Predominance of Sensate Values

Things were going on well for long years; and then what happened? Śaṅkara continues:

anuṣṭhātṛṇām kāmodbhavāt hīyamāna vivekavijñānahetukena adharmeṇa abhibhūyamāne dharme pravardhamāne ca adharme—

'those who practised this *dharma*, due to becoming bereft of discrimination and wisdom, developed excessive sensory desires, with the result that *dharma* or value awareness was overthrown, and *adharma* or social evils multiplied.'

When such a situation comes, the society concerned reaches a state of decay with increasing lust, greed, violence, and self-centredness and devoid of the virtues and graces that integrated human being with human being in its healthy state earlier. The first thing that happens when overcome by *kāma* and *krodha,* lust and anger, is that *viveka,* capacity for discrimination, and *vijñāna,* wisdom, desert the people. The understanding regarding right and wrong gets dimmer and dimmer. Discrimination as to the stage at which one has to restrain oneself from the pursuit of sensate pleasures is lost. Then what happens? *Dharma* is overpowered by *adharma;* ethical restraints get completely eliminated. Everyone does whatever he or she likes, just what we find in many fields of life in India today. When *dharma* is overcome, it is a negative state giving birth to another positive state—increase of *adharma.* There are more and more of evil deeds and less and less of good deeds. We study in history the birth and growth, and decay and death of several civilizations. The best example is the once powerful Roman civilization well documented by Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* It well illustrates what Śaṅkarācārya says here. Gibbon describes vividly the steady decay of moral and humanist values in the Roman Empire, century after century, and its final fall from a barbarian invasion.

India also, in her five-thousand-year history, has experienced such decay; but she did not experience the last step, namely, death. Every decay was followed by a dynamic regeneration. That is expressed by Śaṅkarācārya in the next passage of his introduction:

> *Jagataḥ sthitim paripipālayiṣuḥ, sa ādikartā nārāyaṇākhyaḥ viṣṇuḥ bhaumasya brahmaṇaḥ brāhmaṇatvasya rakṣaṇārtham devakyām vasudevāt amśena Kṛṣṇaḥ kila sambabhūva. Brāḥmaṇtvasya hi rakṣaṇena rakṣitaḥ syāt vaidiko dharmaḥ, tadadhīnatvāt varṇāśramabhedānām.*

'Therefore, with a view to ensuring the wellbeing of the world, the primal world-projecting Lord, celebrated as Viṣṇu, known as Nārāyaṇa, was born of Vasudeva (father) through Devakī (mother) as Kṛṣṇa, in order to protect the spirituality, the brāhmaṇahood, of the earth.

‘When *brāhmaṇatva* is protected, the Vedic law of righteousness is also protected, for, on it depends the organization of society into four-fold working groups and four-fold *āśramas*.’ Vedanta does not speak of creation of the world, like potter creating pots out of clay, but it speaks of projection of the world, like the sparks coming out of a blazing fire or the cobweb issuing out of a spider. The many coming out of the One, and later merging back into the One.

Brāhmaṇatva: The Goal of Human Evolution

No politician or intellectual or priest can do this work of social regeneration; only a person of God realization can do it. Such divine souls have appeared again and again in India’s long history, and we are dealing in this passage with one such episode that happened over 3000 years ago, namely, the birth of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In India, we have a fundamental idea: there is such a thing as human evolution, and that evolution is human development from *tamas* to *rajas,* and from *rajas* to *sattva.* The man or woman who is all *sattva* is a remarkable type of person, who is highly evolved and manifesting the divine within. We in India found that, that is the goal of human evolution. How to produce more and more of such people in a society? Every member of society is given this goal, and he or she should try to reach it, or at least direct one’s life in that direction. Move on at your own pace, but do go towards that direction, says Vedanta. What you call in modern thought ‘social theory’ is only social statistics; that won’t do. But Vedanta points out that, in sociology there is a need to provide social direction and humanity must adopt that line of human evolutionary advance. That direction is to be a *sāttvika* person, without any hatred or violence, and ever loving and kind. When such persons are there in a society, there will be no need for even the police, not even for a political state, and much less need for laws and regulations, because here are persons who are self-disciplined and have realized their spiritual oneness with all others. India holds that, that society is most advanced which has the largest number of such people, who are *sāttvika* and spiritual and evolved, and who have manifested the divine within. Such a person is called a *brāhmaṇa,* according to the original Vedantic understanding of that word, and not in the evil casteism context.

The earliest definition of the word *brāhmaṇa* occurs in the four-thousand-year-old *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (3. 8. 10):

Yo vā etadakṣaram gārgī aviditvā asmāt lokāt praiti, sa kṛpaṇaḥ; atha ya etadakṣaram gārgī viditvā asmāt lokāt praiti, sa brāhmaṇaḥ —

'One, O Gārgī, who departs from this world without knowing this Imperishable (Reality), is miserable, a *kṛpaṇaḥ.* But one, O Gārgī, who departs from this world after knowing this Imperishable (Reality) is a *brāhmaṇa*.'

In his commentary on the above, Śaṅkarācārya defines *kṛpaṇaḥ* as 'miserable like a slave bought for a price.'

BHAGAVĀN BUDDHA ON THE *BRĀHMAṆTVA* IDEAL

In the seventh century before Christ, Bhagavān Buddha appeared in India and preached his great message of love and compassion, and instituted a monastic Order which ignored all caste and class distinctions and admitted people of all castes and classes. But he expressed great respect and admiration to the *brāhmaṇatva* ideal. In the great Buddhist book, *The Dhammapada,* which is a part of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* of the *Sūtta Pīṭaka,* there is a whole chapter, the last chapter, chapter 26, named *Brāhmaṇa Vaggo,* in praise and appreciation of the *brāhmaṇa* ideal. I give below a few selected verses from that chapter (*The Dhammapada,* English translation by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Oxford University Press, Tenth Impression, Ch. XXVI):

Yassa pāram apāram vā pārāpāram na vijjati;
Vītaddaram visannuttam tam aham brūmi brāhmaṇam — 3.

'Him I call a *brāhmaṇa*, for whom there is neither this shore nor that shore, nor both, who is free from fear and free from shackles.'

Jhāyim virajam āsīnam, katakiccam anāsavam;
Uttamattam anuppattam tam aham brūmi brāhmaṇam — 4.

'Him I call a *brāhmaṇa*, who is meditative, free from passions, settled, whose work is done, free from taints, and who has attained the highest end (of sainthood).'

Bāhitapāpo hi brāhmaṇo samacariyā samaṇo ti vuccati;
Pabbājayam āttano malam tasmā pabbajito ti vuccati — 6.

'Because he has put aside evil, he is called a *brāhmaṇa*; because he lives in serenity, he is called a *samaṇa;* because he puts away his impurities, he is called a *pabbajita.*

Yassa kāyena vācāya manasā natthi dukhatam;
Samyutam tihi thānehi tam aham brūmi brāhmaṇam — 9.

'Him I call a *brāhmaṇa*, who does not hurt by body, speech, or mind, who is controlled in these three things.'

Na jātāhi na gottena na jaccā hoti brāhmaṇo;
Yam hi saccam ca dhammo ca so sukhi so ca brāhmaṇo — 11.

'Not by matted hair, not by lineage, not by caste, does one become a *brāhmaṇa*; he is a *brāhmaṇa* in whom there are truth and righteousness.'

Gambhīrapaññam medhāvim maggāmaggassa kovidam;
Uttamattham anuppattham tam aham brūmi brāhmaṇam—21.

'Him I call a *brāhmaṇa*, whose wisdom is deep, who possesses knowledge, who discerns the right way and the wrong, and who has attained the highest end.'

And in this modern age, Swami Vivekananda, who has severely criticized all casteism and untouchability, has upheld this *brāhmaṇatva* ideal of human evolution. He says in his lecture on *The Future of India* (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. III, pp. 293–94):

'The Brāhminhood is the ideal of humanity in India, as wonderfully put forward by Śaṅkarācārya at the beginning of his commentary on the *Gītā*, where he speaks about the reason for Kṛṣṇa's coming as a preacher for the preservation of Brāhminhood, or *Brāhmaṇtva*. That was the great end. This Brāhmin, the man of God, he who has known Brahman, the ideal man, the perfect man, must remain, he must not go.'

And referring to the evils of casteism, especially to the claim of special privileges by the higher castes, he said (*ibid,* p. 297):

‘The day for these privileges and exclusive claims is gone. *The duty of every aristocracy is to dig its own grave, and the sooner it does so, the better. The more it delays, the more it will fester and the worse death it will die.’*

In recent centuries, we have spoilt that great word *brāhmaṇa*, and it has come to mean a caste-bound superiority-minded person, full of *rajas* and *tamas,* and no touch of *sattva,* and who looks down upon the members of all other castes. This degradation of such a great word has been going on for the last thousand years by the brāhmin caste claiming special privileges for itself among masses of less privileged and unprivileged people. The conscience of modern India has revolted against it and is taking energetic steps to rid Indian society of this evil.

From the Upaniṣads, through Buddha and Śaṅkarācārya, we were taught that this word means one who has realized Brahman, and has become a person full of love and compassion. And the word used in this introductory passage is the abstract form of brāhmaṇa, namely, *brāhmaṇatva,* that is brāhminness, indicating a human type. *Brāhmaṇatva* does not mean any particular individual or group, but it means a high level of human evolution, which is not confined to any special caste or class or nation. There are *brāhmaṇa* types in Russia, America, China, and everywhere else. We have a wonderful idea that a divine incarnation appears in the world; he or she does not initiate any social reforms, for that is a very superficial treatment of social problems, like treating the symptom and not the disease. The incarnation introduces a new value system, which slowly inspires the heart and mind of the people, out of which will come ethical and humanistic awakening, giving rise to all the necessary social reforms. He comes to establish two things: one is the glory and universality of *Sanātana Dharma* or Eternal Religion, and the other is the protection of the ideal type of person who is the embodiment of moral and spiritual values and who has achieved *brāhmaṇatva,* the goal of human evolution.

All people must grow in that direction. Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s incarnation is related to *bhaumasya brahmaṇo brāhmaṇatvasya rakṣaṇārtham*. *Bhaumasya brahmaṇaḥ*—Brahman of the world, that is, the Vedas, the tremendous philosophy and spirituality of the Vedas, where these universal ideas are

found. Nobody need be afraid of questioning this philosophy. It welcomes questioning, for it is very rational, and experiential. Secondly, it is very universal, dealing with humanity as a unit, not as cut up into caste, creed, nation, and race. That is the importance of this Vedic tradition. So, he calls it *bhaumasya brahmaṇo* and *brāhmaṇatvasya rakṣaṇārtham.* The Vedas or the *Śruti* or the Upaniṣads contain only universal principles about God and humanity. Śrī Kṛṣṇa came to protect it and to protect that person who embodies that *Śruti* in his or her own life, the *brāhmaṇa* type. These two have been constantly emphasized in our tradition and literature. In order to achieve this, that very Nārāyaṇa, who promulgated this twofold *dharma,* and created those *prajāpatis* and *kumāras,* exemplars of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, to stabilize this world, when he saw that the world was going in the wrong direction, came as Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī and Vasudeva, with a view to strengthening the great message of the *Śruti;* the spiritual quality of life, and the human type who embodies the *Śruti,* the *brāhmaṇatva*; that is the focus of the divine incarnation.

We often hear that Buddhism is anti-brāhministic. Western writers have been misrepresenting many such things, not knowing that a *brāhmaṇa* as a priest is different from the *brāhmaṇa* as expounded in the great books. There have been many such great *brāhmaṇas* who were really holy and pure. All what we see now is only the priest *brāhmaṇa,* who is a great source of trouble to the society, no doubt. But, never forget what exactly it means, and therefore, in the Buddha incarnation, you find this very idea expressed by Bhagavān Buddha. He had great respect for the *brāhmaṇas.* Buddha knew that they are dedicated to the highest spiritual and intellectual endeavours, and that their life is extremely simple. There have been, of course, people failing to measure up to the ideal, but the ideal should not be forgotten. The terms *brāhmaṇa* and *śramaṇa* occur again and again in Buddha's discourses. Respect both of them, the *brāhmaṇa* and the *śramaṇa,* says Buddha. *Brāhmaṇas* are generally householders, and *śramaṇas* are monastic. Even householders are highly respected because they live a *sāttvika* life.

From very ancient times, we understood that every human being has the potentiality to evolve into a *brāhmaṇa* of this type, without any enemity or hatred, and with a heart full of love and compassion. We had Mahatma

Gandhi in the modern period. In one sense, caste-wise he was a *vaiśya;* but, by his character, he was a *brāhmaṇa.* He showed no hatred to anyone, even to the police who struck him down in South Africa; and he refused to go and give witness against them in the court. Even today we have such people, and a man like Gandhiji once again reassures us that it is not an impossible thing to achieve this state. So, what do we do?

Modern biology says that, with the appearance of the human being on the evolutionary scene, organic evolution has ceased to have any relevance; the higher brain in humans can do wonders; we have to seek evolution continuing at a higher level, and Sir Julian Huxley calls it *psycho-social* evolution while Vedanta calls it *spiritual evolution*. Biology itself has not yet found the goal of human evolution. It has, however, concluded that, that goal will be governed by quality and not quantity. It is that quality that India sees in its fullness in the *brāhmaṇa* ideal. Here is the ideal and here are a few examples; make your movements in that direction. You may be an ordinary man, full of *tamas.* It does not matter, but there is a progress in life and that progress is in this direction. The whole of India will be completely transformed when this ideal is placed before the people. Proceed in that direction according to your strength. One step, two steps, three steps, and what a change will come into your life. This is applicable to America, Russia, Germany, China, and everywhere—this *brāhmaṇa* concept of human excellence. *Today we need to understand that that is the goal of social evolution.* Much of current sociology is only social statistics, but real sociology is that which stresses human spiritual growth and social evolution. What is the nature of a society, which evolves in that direction? We call it spiritual direction. The spiritual direction is the goal of evolution at the human stage. That is being slowly promulgated by 20th century biology: go beyond this bodily limitation, sensory limitation; this higher brain is meant for that. They are also speaking of psychosocial evolution. The psyche that can feel one with all people and society. Then there will be no exploitation, and that is the *brāhmaṇa* spirit.

So, the whole direction of evolution as given by 20th century biology is towards the *brāhmaṇa* type in every society. That is the importance of this statement in Śaṅkara's sloka-in-eng-last-line.

This is the path and goal of human evolution, according to Vedanta. To put people on the road of this evolution, to give them a little push, a little stimulus, an incarnation of God comes. When that stimulus is given, many evils disappear in course of time, because your attitude is changed, your value system is changed, and you have yoked your life to some high purpose. Whatever little mistakes you commit are not harmful. This is the idea of human growth and development, and only an incarnation of God, who is a *yuga-pravartaka* or a history-maker and divinity in one, can do this kind of work. The power that is needed to set in motion this tremendous current of spiritual energy comes only from that type of person whom we call an incarnation. You may use any other term. It is an extraordinary power, not what you find even in an ordinary saint, but something extraordinary, which can create a new historical epoch. Such people, very few only, are world-moving personalities. We treat Śrī Rāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Buddha as world-moving personalities; a Jesus, and now, in this modern period, we have Sri Ramakrishna. It is a wonderful study against the background of our whole tradition. When things go bad, that same power has to come once again, and he comes. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say later on in the fourth chapter of the *Gītā*, many will not recognize him, because he comes as an ordinary human being. However, in course of time, he will be recognized by millions. Since we are too near a great man, we cannot recognize him. This concept of *avatāra,* which Śrī Kṛṣṇa will describe in the fourth chapter of the *Gītā*, is central to *Sanātana Dharma* and Christianity. No other religion has this concept of *avatāra.* In this modern age, a similar adjustment became necessary, and a great person, Sri Ramakrishna, was born. The teaching is with us in the books, but we are not able to understand it, or how to follow it. Somebody must come and give us a new insight. Who will do that? Not a pundit, nor a priest, nor a professor. What do they know? There must be a tremendous spiritual personality, and he comes silently, quietly, and sets in motion a new current of spirituality. That spirituality slowly envelopes people little by little, and slowly changes the world.

VIVEKANANDA ON THE DIVINITY OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

How does the *avatāra* change the ratio of forces in the society? Śaṅkara will answer this in the course of his sloka-in-eng-last-line, but at this particular stage of our subject, I wish to share with you what Swami Vivekananda said about the importance of the *avatāra,* who comes to set right things in society when they go wrong. He was speaking in New York in America, on the important subject of *My Master*. He never spoke on Sri Ramakrishna in America or Europe, during his four years there; he only spoke of Vedanta. When people heard he had a teacher by name Ramakrishna, and that he was a wonderful personality, they pressed him to talk about his Master. So, in New York and in London, he gave this one lecture on 'My Master'. That lecture, in the beginning, contains this statement of Śaṅkara: When circumstances go beyond control and society becomes corrupt, in order to restore the moral values, a great power becomes manifest. That is how he begins his lecture. It is a wonderful lecture in beautiful English and a beautiful characterization of a great teacher. As a student at home, and as a *brahmacāri* of the Ramakrishna Order, I must have read this lecture about twenty-five times. So wonderful it is, from every point of view. He begins (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. IV, pp. 154–56):

'"Whenever virtue subsides and vice prevails, I come down to help mankind", declares Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad Gītā.* Whenever this world of ours, on account of growth, on account of added circumstances, requires a new adjustment, a wave of power comes, and as a man acts on two planes, the spiritual and the material, the waves of adjustment come on both the planes. On the one side, of the adjustment on the material plane, Europe has mainly been the basis during modern times; and of the adjustment on the other, the spiritual plane, Asia has been the basis throughout the history of the world. Today, man requires one more adjustment on the spiritual plane; today, when material ideas are at the height of their glory and power; today, when man is likely to forget his divine nature, through his growing dependence on matter, and is likely to be reduced to a mere money-making machine, an adjustment is necessary; the voice has spoken, and the power is coming to drive away the clouds of gathering materialism. The power has been set in motion, which, at no distant date, will bring unto mankind once

more the memory of its real nature; and again the place from which this power will start will be Asia.

‘This world of ours is organized on the plan of division of labour. It is vain to say that one man shall possess everything. It is still more vain to say that one nation shall possess everything. Yet how childish we are! The baby in its ignorance thinks that its doll is the only possession that is to be coveted in this whole universe. So a nation which is great in the possession of material power thinks that that is all that is to be coveted, and that that is all that is meant by progress, that that is all that is meant by civilization, and if there are other nations which do not care for possession and do not possess that power, they are not fit to live, their whole existence is useless!

‘On the other hand, another nation may think that mere material civilization is utterly useless. From the Orient came the voice, which once told the world that if a man possesses everything that is under the sun, and does not possess spirituality, of what avail is it? This is the Oriental type; the other is the Occidental type.

‘Each of these types has its grandeur, each has its glory. The present adjustment will be the harmonizing, the mingling, of these two ideals. To the Oriental, the world of spirit is as real as to the Occidental is the world of the senses. In the spiritual, the Oriental finds everything what he wants or hopes for; in it he finds all that makes life real to him. To the Occidental, he is a dreamer; to the Oriental, the Occidental is a dreamer, playing with ephemeral toys, and he laughs to think that grown-up men and women should make so much of a handful of matter which they will have to leave sooner or later. Each calls the other a dreamer.

‘But the Oriental ideal is as necessary for the progress of the human race as is the Occidental, and I think, it is more necessary. Machines never made mankind happy and never will make. He who is trying to make us believe this, will claim that happiness is in the machine; but it is always in the mind. That man alone who is the lord of his mind can become happy, and none else. And what, after all, is this power of machinery? Why should a man who can send a current of electricity through a wire be called a very great man and a very intelligent man? Does not nature do a million times more than that every moment? Then why not fall down and worship nature?

What avails it if you have power over the whole world, if you have mastered every atom in the universe? That will not make you happy unless you have the power of happiness in yourself, until you have conquered yourself. Man is born to conquer nature, it is true, but the Occidental means by 'nature' only physical or external nature. It is true that external nature is majestic, with its mountains and oceans, and rivers, and with its infinite powers and varieties. Yet there is a more majestic internal nature of man, higher than the sun, moon, and stars, higher than the earth of ours, higher than the physical universe, transcending these little lives of ours. And it affords another field of study. There the Orientals excel, like the Occidentals excel in the other. Therefore, it is fitting that, whenever there is a spiritual adjustment, it should come from the Orient. It is also fitting that when the Oriental wants to learn about machine-making, he should sit at the feet of the Occidental and learn from him. When the Occidental wants to learn about the spirit, about God, about the soul, about the meaning and mystery of this universe, he must sit at the feet of the Orient to learn.

'I am going to present before you the life of one man who has put in motion such a wave in India.

Then, after narrating the wonderful story of Sri Ramakrishna's life, he concludes in these words (*ibid*., p. 187):

'This is the message of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world: "Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality; and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticize no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realization. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light."

'The more such men are produced in a country, the more that country will be raised; and that country where such men absolutely do not exist is simply doomed, nothing can save it. Therefore, my Master's message to mankind is: "Be spiritual and realize truth for yourself." He would have you

give up for the sake of your fellow-beings. He would have you cease talking about love for your brother, and set to work to prove your words. The time has come for renunciation, for realization, and then you will see the harmony in all the religions of the world. You will know that there is no need of any quarrel, and then only will you be ready to help humanity.

'To proclaim and make clear the fundamental unity underlying all religions was the mission of my Master. Other teachers have taught special religions, which bear their names, but this great teacher of the nineteenth century made no claim for himself. He left every religion undisturbed because he had realized that, in reality, they are all part and parcel of the one eternal religion.'

INDIAN CONCEPT OF *ŚRUTI AND SMṚTI*

When you study these old books like the Upaniṣads, you will find how much they harmonize with the thinking of the great souls, which we produced in the modern period. There is a historical continuity. This new adjustment is the same ancient adjustment, but in terms of modern conditions. This is what India has been taught again and again. Circumstances change, we need a new formulation of the ancient truth. Truth remains the same, only the dressing is changed. This is what we understand from our very ancient and continuing tradition. There are two words, *Śruti* and *Smṛti. Śruti* means the Vedas, especially in its Upaniṣad portions, which deal with the eternal verities, whereas, *Smṛtis* deal with contemporary social rules and regulations. *Smṛti* is secondary to *Śruti.* Indian tradition emphasizes this point: *Śruti smṛti virodhe tu śrutireva garīyasī,* 'when there is a conflict between the *Śruti* and the *Smṛti,* the *Śruti* shall prevail as greater authority.' *Śruti* is eternal. What you call *Sanātana Dharma* refers to the *Śruti,* the nature of man, nature of God, how we achieve spiritual realization, these are eternal truths. They are truths for us, for Americans, for every one; they are universal. Just as scientific truths are universal, so also *Śruti* truths are universal, because they are products of a science of human being in depth, a science of human possibilities. That is why we call it *Sanātana Dharma,* that *Dharma* which is *Sanātana,* eternal. Bhagavān Buddha constantly refers to this in his teachings: *eṣa dharmaḥ sanātanaḥ,* 'this *dharma* is *sanātana* or eternal'. Along with it comes *Yuga*

Dharma, a *dharma* for a particular *Yuga* or period, for a particular age of history, a particular group of people. That is called *Smṛti.*

The *Smṛtis* come and go. How many *Smṛtis* were promulgated and set aside in India? Today all the old *Smṛtis* are abrogated, if they go against our national democratic Constitution. We have the courage to change our *Smṛtis* and develop a new *Smṛti* in tune with contemporary thinking. This is the great idea in India—social change. And the teachings, which are eternal, are reformulated according to the changed circumstances. For that you need great teachers, for they have the spiritual knowledge and authority to do this. That authority does not come from a status like that of a bishop, or a pope, or a priest or any traditional religious authority. It comes from spiritual realization; it comes from infinite compassion in the heart of a spiritual teacher. That is how new *Smṛtis* come into being. India held fast to this ideal. And the result is that from the Vedic age up to this modern age, many changes have taken place in religion, in society, in our country, and yet we are the same. *We are eternal and yet changing all the time*. That is the gist of the very term *Sanātana Dharma.* Professor Brajendranath Seal was a college mate of Vivekananda and Vice-Chancellor of the Mysore University; he had a brilliant intellect. He has said, 'India is ever ageing, but never old'; it is because of this adjustment that takes place at particular periods. This is the India that is taking shape today in a new setting, the same ancient India but adopting necessary changes. Much dead wood is being cut and removed. *This courage to change a Smṛti*, *and that too peacefully, is purely a Hindu heritage.* No other religion has shown that courage. In all other religions, *Smṛtis* are all in all; they cannot be touched, and if any reformer attempts to change them, he is persecuted and killed. But we say, 'Change the out-dated *Smṛti* and form a new *Smṛti,* if it does not fit us now.' Sri Ramakrishna himself has said, 'Mughal coins have no currency under the East India Company rule.' That means old *Smṛtis* have no current value. A new currency was needed in the period of the East India Company, and another in the Republic of India. About a hundred years ago, a person was ex-communicated by Indian society if one went to a foreign country. But who cares for it now?

Many changes have taken place and they have purified our religion and made our society healthy. But do not forget the *Śruti,* the eternal truth, the

spiritual nature of man, and the life's journey to realize this truth. That is the *Sanātana Dharma.* The great contribution of an *avatāra* is to stress this. A mere social leader will come and advocate and effect some social reforms. But an *avatāra* does not disturb society at all. He puts a new value system into the society; with that we know what is good and what is bad, reforms are effected, and we change accordingly silently. That is the gentle, silent way in which this great spiritual method works on society. It is a great idea. We do not know that the great teacher has come and gone. But a wonderful energy has been left behind. I had a letter from far away Sofia, Bulgaria, just a few days ago. One letter from one Mr. Alexander; a wonderful letter, it says: 'My wife and I read *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.* I am thirty years old, and she is twenty-three. Tanthia is her name; my name is Alexander. A wonderful book. But we do not know anything more about Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. We want you to give us some information. I wrote to somebody in Bangalore, Mrs. Devika Rani, the famous film-actress. She replied to me to write to the Swami in Hyderabad.' The man writes that he wants to know more about Sri Ramakrishna, more about Vivekananda. They are so eager to get all this inspiration. So I wrote, 'I will send you some books', and I asked somebody in West Berlin to send them. These great teachers like Sri Ramakrishna enter your life silently, without any noise, and changes take place within the reader. That is what happens when an incarnation comes. Śaṅkarācārya explains the idea of how an *avatāra* functions in society and gently transforms the society, putting people on the road of their own spiritual development. How is it done? Śaṅkara will explain it in a few sentences, and we shall study it.

During our study of Śaṅkarācārya's introduction to the *Gītā*, we came across two great ideas. One, society deteriorates in course of time due to attitudinal changes in people. Excessive lust, anger, and such other traits manifest, and disturb the ethical equilibrium in society. Therefore *dharma* declines and *adharma* increases, as Śaṅkarācārya said. Then decline begins due to excessive sensory attractions and uncontrollable desires, and the result is that *viveka* and *vijñāna* are destroyed. *Viveka* means discrimination —the ability to judge what one should do and what one should not do. Wherever there is excessive attachment to something, our discrimination

suffers. Along with this, *vijñāna,* wisdom, gets disturbed. When a human being is not able to control his or her sensory appetites, something happens to the mind. The senses run away, as the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* puts it, like the horses dragging away the carriage, making the passenger a helpless victim. That is the state of men and society when on the decline. When *dharma* declines, *adharma* automatically increases. When morality is low, immorality increases in human society.

Role of a Divine Incarnation in Advancing Human Evolution

In India, we have the tremendous faith that whenever such a situation arises, when ordinary human wisdom cannot restore the balance, a divine manifestation appears on the earth, and through his teachings, society begins to achieve a new balance, a fresh understanding of values; *dharma* rises and *adharma* declines. It is only because of this, that despite problems every now and then, we have been living for the past 5000 years. Before the birth of Buddha, there was much intellectualism, meaningless asceticism, and the masses of people lived with all sorts of superstitions and mental weakness. Then Buddha came in the 7th or 6th century BC. He did not initiate any social reform movement. He merely stimulated the spiritual impulses in human beings. As a result, people once again developed honesty, integrity, compassion and the spirit of service. These are consequences of the spiritual awareness of human beings. That is how great teachers work and great reform movements are born as a result of the inspiration derived from such great people. It is like watering the roots of the tree and not merely the branches and leaves.

These great people do not initiate any reform movements, for such movements do not deal with the fundamental malady of society or of human beings. Take Sri Ramakrishna, for example. He did not start any reform movement, but by his inspiration many reform movements will be born, many saints, artists, etc., will come. A basic spiritual stimulus is given to human society. This is what has happened, time and again, in our country. It has seen decline, but it has also seen resurrection, regeneration. When a nation lives very long, often such physical and mental maladies arise, but the nation becomes young once again. This experience is unique to India and has been referred to by many historians.

Many other civilizations arose in this world, played their part for a few centuries, and then decline started and they died. We now only study about them in books and museums, whereas our civilization has a continuity. Every now and then it gets refreshed, a new youthfulness comes to it, tremendous energy comes, and things begin to improve. A new *Yuga* begins and the people develop high moral awareness, humanistic impulse, and spirit of service.

When we read Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* we come to know how powerful that empire was. The Eastern Mediterranean region, Southern Europe, and North Africa were under the Romans, including Palestine and Israel. Slowly, decline set in and what was its nature? How did it come about? The race was the same, they were intelligent, but love of pleasure increased and they did not want to do hard work and live a hard life. Everyone wanted profit and pleasure, but very few cared to contribute to the good of the society. So, the Romans became lazy; they wanted only pleasure while they had slaves to do physical labour. With pleasure and comfort, man's aesthetic taste suffered; they indulged in violence and orgies. In their amphitheatres, slaves were made to fight with wild animals; and thousands of people, including the top hierarchy of the Government, would watch, and when a lion tore a man to pieces, they would applaud. In such situations, you can see a decline of taste and of human values. People living at that time, amazingly, did not realize that they were on the decline, because it was a slow decline. Civilization grows slowly and declines slowly. It is only after a century or so that one realizes that something is wrong with society. Gibbon also refers to the state of religion in the Roman Empire in a wonderful sentence. All the cults and religions of the Roman Empire were believed to be equally true by the people, equally false by the philosophers, and equally useful by the magistrates! The title of the book, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* is very suggestive. People led a corrupt life. When foreign invaders came, the young people did not want to fight and defend the Empire. They had mercenaries to fight for them.

We want comfort, pleasure. One does not want to give up night-clubs, one is reluctant to go to the war front. When this decline affects the important people of society, the whole structure collapses. With a single

foreign invasion, the whole Roman society was shattered, never to rise again. This is the story of the Roman Empire. Many other empires passed through similar phases—Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria.

After the First World War, many thinkers in Europe began to wonder whether Europe too was passing through such a phase. The first book that was published in Europe in this century, regarding European Civilization, was by Oswal Spengler [1880-1936], the German scholar and philosopher, entitled *The Decline of the West.* It was very powerfully written, wherein he said that Western society has finished its task and was on the decline. But some conservatives, such as Henri Massau of France who wrote *In Defence of the West,* did not agree; they felt they were still strong, for they had many colonies under them. Then came the Second World War, more serious, and there is much thinking in the West about a deficiency in their culture. Too much of crude materialism, multiplication of wants, signifies something terribly wrong with society. Therefore, more books are being written on the decline of the modern Western Civilization.

Is America on Decline and how it can be Avoided

During my extensive tour of America in 1971–72, I came across the weekly U.S. News Magazine, *Time,* of 19 July 1971, which, under its 'American Notes' section and under the title 'Of the U.S. and Rome', had published the following despatch: 'Odd how Rome continues to spook the American imagination of Interventionists and Cold War warriors invoke the ancient empire as an example of world order that the U.S. must help to impose. On the other hand, Rome is also invoked by those who see the decline of the West in every long-haired head and every puff of pot.' Speaking to Northwest news editors in Kansas City, President Nixon referred to Federal buildings in Washington and said:

"Sometimes when I see those pillars, I think of seeing them on the Acropolis in Greece. I think of seeing them also in the Forum in Rome—great stark pillars—and I have walked in both at night. I think of what happened to Greece and Rome, and you see what is left—only the pillars. What has happened, of course, is that, great civilizations of the past, as they have become wealthy, as they have lost their will to live, to improve, they

have become subject to the decadence that eventually destroys the civilization. The United States is now reaching that period."

To be sure, Nixon quickly went on to express his confidence that the nation has the "vitality, courage, and strength" to remain morally and spiritually healthy. Despite this upbeat note, the overall effect was one of instant spenglerism.

During my 1968–69 tour of the U.S.A., I had come across a book by the well-known doodle writer of America, Roger Price, bearing the catching title, *Decline and Fall by Gibbon and Roger Price.* The name of the author of the famous book, *The Decline and Fall of Roman Empire,* was added by Price to his own, not only because of his seeing a common trait, namely, decline, between ancient Rome and his own America, but also because he quotes an appropriate passage from Gibbon relating to Roman decline, on the left page of his book to illustrate the same on the right page with an appropriate picture relating to current American life, chosen by himself.

Present day Western Civilization, European in general and American in particular, has an intrinsic greatness. Any decay of this civilization will be a great loss to humanity. I am sure it will be prevented by the process of cross-fertilization of cultures such as what is taking place in India today, and what Vivekananda wanted Modern India to be. In America itself, in the 19th century, we had the Transcendentalist movement, which intended to give a spiritual orientation, to American culture. That found a more prominent expression in Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman. While leaving London back for America, Emerson received a copy of the *Gītā,* which we are studying in this series of lectures, from the British intellectual, Carlyle. With the receipt of the book, Emerson began to write his famous essays in a different style with the *Gītā*'s ideas prominently expressed.

In his *Life of Vivekananda*, Romain Rolland gives the following note (2nd edition, 1944, pp. 52-53):

'In July 1846 Emerson notes that Thoreau had been reading to him extracts from his *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. Now this

work (Section, Monday) is an enthusiastic eulogy of the *Gītā*, and of the great poems and philosophies of India.'

The emotion produced in Emerson by Indian thought, must have been very strong for him to write in 1856 such a deeply *Vedantic* poem as his beautiful *Brahma* (*Ibid*. p. 54):

> If the red slayer think he slays,
> Or if the slain think he is slain,
> They know not well the subtle ways
> I keep, and pass, and turn again.
>
> Far or forgot to me is near;
> Shadow and sunlight are the same;
> The vanished gods to me appear;
> And one to me are shame and fame.
>
> They reckon ill who leave me out;
> When me they fly, I am the wings;
> I am the doubter and the doubt,
> And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.
>
> The strong gods pine for my abode,
> And pine in vain the sacred Seven; But thou, meek lover of the good!
> Find me and turn thy back on heaven.'

In his book *Walden*, American transcendentalist Thoreau refers to the *Gītā* in these words (*Walden*, p. 266, S.Chand & Co., New Delhi):

'In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial.'

But America continued to develop only materialism based on physical science. Then came, at the end of the 19th century, Vivekananda's exposition of the *science of human possibilities*, which is Vedanta, proclaiming the divinity and immortality of every human being, in the Chicago Parliament of Religions, and thereafter for four years in various parts of America and England.

Swami Vivekananda has given a compressed statement of Vedanta in these words (*Complete Works*, Vol. 1, p. 124):

'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divine within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'

That message is slowly spreading in the West in various forms. And I am sure that the spiritual orientation of the European and American civilizations is bound to progress from the first century of the third millennium onwards.

The process of decay of civilizations is what Śaṅkarācārya depicts exactly in his psychological study: '*anuṣṭhātṛṇām kāmodbhavāt hīyamāna viveka-vijñāna hetukena*'—He has put it in very simple Sanskrit. 'When there is *anuṣṭhātṛṇām,* the citizens develop excessive *kāma,* sensory urges;' when *kāma* goes beyond a certain level, many evils begin to appear in society, and, '*viveka* and *vijñāna* begin to decline'. '*Dharma* is overwhelmed'—*abhibhūyamāne dharme,* and 'when *adharma* increases'—*pravardhamāne ca adharme.* This is the sort of situation that obtains in almost all societies in a later stage, although they all begin well. One idea runs through the books written by various thinkers in the West: Spengler whom I mentioned earlier, even Arnold Toynbee; the concept is that, culture is the dynamic aspect of human society, and when it weakens, there will be a decline in civilization. According to Spengler, civilization itself is a sign of decline whereas culture is a sign of development. When people want greater comforts, more pleasure, more gadgets, the sensory system gets stimulated, wants increase, and civilization begins to decline. When we work hard and struggle to build the nation, we are, as referred to in philosophical language, at the stage of 'becoming'; that is culture. When one has 'become', that is civilization, that is the beginning of decline. A poor man works very hard and builds up an economic empire. His son, having not struggled, merely lives off the wealth and within a generation or two there sets in decline. With all comforts and pleasure, the need for struggle is no more there, and the heroic element in man is stifled. Fortune

never stays in the same family for more than three or four generations. Thus, culture and civilization pass through the stages of 'becoming' and 'become'; that is the analysis given by Spengler and others.

How India has Experienced Many a Decay but Avoided Death

Our Indian culture has passed through all these phases. Take the Vedic period, great culture. What struggles and hardships people endured to build it up. The mind was active and energetic and had great vigour. This continued till the Epic period. There was a tremendous setback; the *Mahābhārata* war at Kurukṣetra, more than three thousand years ago, was a great setback! The best of the race died in the war, thousands of them. That is considered to be a watershed in our history. Sometime later, new strength came but again it declined. It went on, like waves rising and falling, but the uniqueness, as I mentioned before, is that we decay but we never die. Some new power comes and we are refreshed once again. What a depth we had gone to in the last century! When we read the literature of the time, we can see to what low level the human mind in India had degenerated. All the original strength, vigour, and creativity disappeared, and we were a half-dead people. Out of that state came a tremendous awakening and new developments. How did it come about? Here comes the great idea. Not only does a great spiritual teacher arrive on the scene and raise the people, but sometimes a cultural cross-fertilization also takes place. Western culture helped destroy many of our foolish notions. It showed us new paths and made us more energetic. This was not the intention of the Westerners, but that was the result; infusion of Western ideas into India resulted in a new awakening and a new strength and youthfulness.

Cultural Decay Avoided by Cross-fertilization of Cultures

A cultural cross-fertilization may take place, but to utilize it fully, to make it a creative movement, we need great thinkers, far-sighted leaders. India produced in the last century many such, beginning with Raja Rammohan Roy, and finally flowering into a powerful, creative and unifying movement by Swami Vivekananda. When we study the history of the 19th century, beginning from Swami Vivekananda, we find that this awakening achieved great maturity and a tremendous scope, not merely

national, but also international. Therefore, cross-fertilization alone is not enough. One must be able to utilize that energy and give it a proper direction. The greatest achievement of Swami Vivekananda was the combining of the best elements of our own heritage, after removing all that was weakening and superstitious in it, with that which was good in what was taken from the West. He told us that soon a new India would be created, an India much greater than what she has been in the past, by combining all the energies of the Western culture with our own energies. That is what is slowly and silently taking place in the modern period, and in course of time, it will astound the world. This is the way Swami Vivekananda channelled the energy of the tremendous awakening that took place in the last century, through our coming in touch with the dynamic culture of the West. Although India was then under foreign political domination, there was also the impact of the tremendous thought-processes of the West, which made us think in new ways. Till then we were in a groove, as it were, narrow and sectarian in outlook. Vivekananda gave expression to the then state of affairs in his *Lectures from Colombo to Almora,* a book every citizen of India must read to understand his or her country and its pulse, and how to integrate Indian and Western cultural values.

'Give up all those old discussions, old fights, about things that are meaningless, which are nonsensical in their very nature. Think of the last six hundred or seven hundred years of degradation when grown-up men by hundreds have been discussing for years whether we should drink a glass of water with the right hand or the left, whether the hand should be washed three times or four times, whether we should gargle five or six times. What can we expect from men who pass their lives in discussing such momentous questions as these and writing most learned philosophies on them!'

All this received a blow when India got in contact with the British. It made people think once again. The child of that very old pundit could later become a Nobel laureate C.V. Raman, studying and contributing to modern physical science, a new line of development. That is what is called renaissance, a new life coming to the people. That was in the last century and today we are reaping the fruits of that tremendous development. A new youthfulness, a fresh energy, has come but we are not out of the woods yet.

There is so much trouble now, widespread corruption and violence; but it also shows that there is energy in the people, and that is an asset. Things can be changed and these great teachers have come to transform this energy into a better form. They are not worried about the violence and crime. From *tamas* to *rajas* is a real progress and when in *rajas,* you become a problem to yourself and to society; but still it is a progress from a state of lifelessness called *tamas* to *rajas*. The next step has to be taken, namely, *sattva,* a tremendous state of disciplined and constructive energy, humanized energy. What a wonderful state that would be! India received such teachings not only from spiritual teachers, but even from her political leaders. Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Subhas Chandra Bose, Motilal Nehru, and others lived noble lives, sacrificing money and material comfort for the sake of the nation. Such high minds were there in the last century and beginning of this century, apart from spiritual giants like Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Gandhi was a tremendous spiritual force. There was the national Congress leader, Chittaranjan Das, who died in 1925, and it is reported that Gandhiji himself carried his dead body for cremation. Das was a poor man. He studied law and earned well from his practice. His father had declared himself insolvent and died in poverty. The first thing Chittaranjan Das did with his earnings was to clear all the debts and had his dead father's name struck off from the insolvency list. Here we can see the nobility of the human mind. He could have easily ignored the debts since his father was already dead, but to him honour was more important than money. Today we have lost that character. Today money is everything and honour is of no importance, and such a difference within a span of eighty years! Such great people guided our national energies to give a new life to India; and above all of them was Swami Vivekananda, whose impact had been on all these great political leaders also. We will understand the nature of this impact when we read Romain Rolland's biography of Vivekananda. When Gandhiji went to Calcutta to attend the 1921 Congress Session, he also visited the Ramakrishna Math at Belur. Addressing an informal group of people assembled on the lawns below, Gandhiji said that he had not come to Belur Math to preach *satyāgraha* but to receive inspiration from the place where Vivekananda lived, so that he could love his nation better. 'By reading Vivekananda, my love for India has increased a thousand-fold',

was Gandhiji's tribute to Swamiji; and he asked the people to take some of that inspiration with them when they leave for home.

In his brief life of 39 years, Swamiji brought a fresh youthfulness to this wonderful ancient culture, which had become almost decrepit. Many Imperialist British writers had predicted that this culture would decay and die, by the touch of the dynamic Western culture. Macaulay, who introduced English education in India, wrote that it was bound to die within a short time. However, the exact opposite happened. India once again became vigorous, with a new vital energy pushing her forward. If Ramakrishna and Vivekananda had not come, we would still have been energetic and active. Modern Western culture would have made us energetic no doubt, but we would have lost our soul, the continuity with our hoary past would have been lost. That did not happen because of such great teachers.

We find these ideas in Śaṅkara's *Gītā* Introduction. Some of the then Indian leaders, taking a reactionary attitude, had said that we should have no contact with the West, we should not accept ideas from foreign countries, we should stick to our own. But the country did not listen to them. But Swamiji said we have a great culture, but added that others also have great ideas and we should accept them with humility. He asked us to learn from the West, politics, economics, public affairs, science and technology. In a letter from America to India, Swami Vivekananda wrote (*Complete Works,* vol. V, p. 29):

'Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts?'

This idea of learning from others is not something new. In the *Manu Smṛti* (2. 238) we find this statement:

Śraddhadānaḥ śubhām vidyām ādadīt avarādapi;
Antyādapi param dharmam, strīratnam duṣkulādapi —

'Acquire pure knowledge with great faith from even the inferiors; learn great *dharma* even from low-caste people, take a gem of a woman as wife even from a bad family.'

What a broad social attitude we find in that statement! Swami Vivekananda said that new India should be a good mingling of the East and the West; today the ancient Greek is meeting the ancient Hindu on the soil of India. These are his own words from his Madras lecture of February 1897 on the *Work before us*. Our education in ancient India used to be a unified one. We retained our culture, yet we took and assimilated what others had to give. Such mingling now, again, will create a new India. This idea has to spread slowly and steadily. We have many foibles, weaknesses, and evils today. These, however, are part of the growing process of a nation coming to life. A deprived people, getting some opportunity in life, commit mistakes and blunders, but they can correct themselves because great teachers have shown us the method, the way.

The idea of cross-fertilization of cultures is great. In fact, the modern European civilization is a product of cultural cross-fertilization. Greek thought entered Europe in the 15th–16th centuries AD. Greece by then was a dead nation. It was conquered by the Roman Empire around the second century. In the third century, it had accepted Christianity, which was entirely foreign to the ancient Greek culture. Generally we find that wherever Christianity or Islam went, they destroyed everything ancient. So, ancient Greek thought got confined to only books. Western Europeans were barbarians and were totally ignorant of the ancient Greek thought. Right across the river Danube and beyond the Roman Empire, the Scandinavian countries and Germany were all barbarian countries. Later, Romans took to Christianity, but that religion had a narrow outlook on life. It could not appreciate the great achievements of the Greeks and Romans, and called them pagans. These cultures were annihilated. This period in European history, the medieval period up to 1250 AD was called the dark ages.

Then, Roman Constantinople, the very heart of Europe connecting the East and the West, was conquered by the Turks. The Turks, Muslims, got stronger and stronger and conquered all the nearby Christian countries. Constantinople fell in 1453 AD, and many Greek scholars started migrating to Western Europe, carrying with them their books. Europeans were not allowed to travel east through Turkey, with the result Europe lost all contact with the East, even India. That was what made the West seek new routes to India via the Cape of Good Hope and others proceeded to India westward

and reached America and took it to be India. That is modern history. But around 1453 AD, with the fall of Constantinople, Greek thought entered West Europe and gave it a new vision of humanism, secularism, and broad attitudes. That brought about what is known in European history as the 'Renaissance'. All subsequent development, from the 16th century onwards, is the product of this fertilization of the European mind by Greco-Roman culture.

Later, there was the Reformation; Christianity got broken up and some people, including those like Voltaire and the Enlightened groups in Germany and other countries, turned atheists. However, this gave rise to a new Europe, full of youthfulness and vigour, which could not be contained within itself, just as in the case of ancient Greece. A tiny Athenian town with a population of only 250 thousand, exercised tremendous power covering the whole of Greece. It became an empire, and under Alexander, conquered many countries, right up to India. Now the European nations were also like that. They got tremendous energy, and not knowing how to contain it, they went out conquering, colonizing, and exploiting and destroying other nations. They however gave some new ideas also. New life came to Europe then, but that is declining now. At this very period, Indian spiritual ideas, rational and broad, have started going to Europe and America to rejuvenate their culture.

When imperial domination of India by Britain took place, it was an unpleasant confrontation between the East and the West. Now it has developed into a happy confrontation. There is an exchange of ideas between the East and the West, and people welcome many of the ideas from the West. Modern Western Civilization will not die like Rome. Roman civilization had to die and it was taken over by Christianity. Only the Church and its power were present, everything else faded out. Historian Prof. Arnold Toynbee has referred to a confrontation between Roman paganism represented by Roman Senator Symmachus, and Catholic Christianity as represented by Bishop Ambrose of Rome. The Bishop expressed the view that his Christianity, now gathering strength in the Roman Empire, was the only way to God. The Roman Pagan Senator Symmachus upheld the pagan view that there were many paths to God. But the Christian Church silenced the senator. But, Toynbee adds that, that

Senator was silenced, but the point of view he held is upheld by millions of Hindus even today.

However, now, with the renaissance of India, new ideas will enter all the Western nations and they will once again get new youthfulness and vigour. Today you find many people in the West who do not want the present type of living with its philosophy of consumerism—eating, drinking, and pleasure-seeking. The first manifestation of this was the Hippy movement, especially in America, and later in France; a boy or a girl born in a rich family but not wanting to identify himself or herself with it. They preferred to wear simple, ordinary dresses—a sign of renunciation. That is the beginning of a new energy coming to the people. It has faded for the time being, but may erupt again.

When you read these words of Śaṅkarācārya, you read the truth about human society, about collective human endeavour. Culture has a wave-like motion, going down and again coming up. This coming up, in our country, as I said earlier, was always initiated by a great spiritual teacher. No politician or military general, not even a physical scientist, can initiate such a movement. Only a man of God, who has deep insight into the Truth in the heart of man, can set in motion such a current. In that context, I had quoted earlier, Swami Vivekananda's beautiful presentation in his New York lecture on 'My Master', of how, in the modern period, a new adjustment is taking place between India and the West. By mutual give and take, a new culture and a global awareness will come into being, there will be a new global harmony in society.

I mentioned previously that in the ancient period a great incarnation had come in India in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Dealing with the *Mahābhārata* period, Śaṅkara said, and I have already quoted it, when *dharma* was overcome by *adharma,* by too much sensual desire and decline of discrimination and wisdom, in order to protect the great Vedic philosophy and spirituality of *Sanātana Dharma,* the Divine Nārāyaṇa incarnated as Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī and Vasudeva.

I also discussed then this aspect, the *brāhmaṇa* ideal, of Indian sociology, quoting from *The Dhammapada*, and expounding Bhagavān Buddha's great respect for this human ideal. It is an ideal, not a person, not

a *jāti* or caste, and every society must keep this as its goal. Self-control, simplicity, compassion, a spirit of service, all these constitute the *brāhmaṇa* type where *sattva* is predominant. He or she is never aggressive, is full of peace and blesses everyone. We saw this expression in our time in Mahatma Gandhi, who, though a *vaiśya* from the caste point of view, was a *brāhmaṇa* from the quality point of view.

This book, the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* discusses this quality as well as the *kṣatriya* quality. Not every person sitting on a throne or wearing a crown is a *kṣatriya*. A *kṣatriya* never flees from battle, says the *Gītā: yuddhe cāpyapalāyanam;* he is courageous, generous, never petty or mean. These qualities have to be assimilated today by our politicians and administrators. The goal for everyone, however, is the *brāhmaṇa* type, a society that evolves from a lower to a higher level. Human evolution is not organic; it is essentially ethical, moral, and spiritual evolution. Human beings do not need better organs. We have the best organ, the brain. We have to make use of the energy of the organic system to take evolution to a higher level. This is where *sattva* comes in. Today we have plenty of energy and we kill people, burn houses, because that energy has not been purified by *sattva.* The challenge therefore is to purify this energy, to humanize it, and achieve the ideal, *brāhmaṇatva. Brāhmaṇatvasya rakṣaṇārtham*—'for the protection of the *brāhmaṇa* ideal', an *avatāra* comes. An *avatāra* comes to protect the Vedas and the *brāhmaṇa* ideal. Vedic *dharma, Sanātana Dharma,* is universal in nature, very pure and rational. At one time it had spread over vast areas of the world, then it got contracted, but now it is once again spreading. Vedic *dharma* includes all *dharmas,* accepts all religions and nowhere else can we see that type of universal vision. To protect the Vedic *dharma* and uphold the *brāhmaṇa* ideal, Śrī Kṛṣṇa was born as the son of Vasudeva and Devakī. 'He had no particular purpose to fulfil, as far as He Himself was concerned', *svaprayojana abhāve api*. By His own *māyā,* He assumed the human form, and, *vaidikam dharma dvayam arjunāya upadideśa,* 'He imparted the two-fold Vedic *dharma*, namely, *pravṛtti lakṣaṇa* and *nivṛtti lakṣaṇa,* to Arjuna'. What was Arjuna's state then—*śoka moha mahodadhau nimagnāya,* 'immersed in the ocean of *śoka,* sorrow, and *moha,* delusion'. These two emotions can distort every aspect of life. An ocean as it were of sorrow and delusion overcame Arjuna, as we

shall see from the description of Arjuna's grief in the first chapter of the *Gītā*.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa conveyed a profound message to Arjuna and through him to all of us. Being full of compassion, he came to this world, assuming a human form and underwent many difficulties. His life was full of troubles. We may think that a person of such an exalted state has an easy life; but it is not at all so, for it was a very tough life. Mahatma Gandhi is said to have remarked, that only a mahatma can know another mahatma's woes. There was character assassination of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, just as we see today in our political life. Some one alleged that Kṛṣṇa had stolen his precious gem, the Syāmantaka, and called Him a thief. Poor Kṛṣṇa had to prove His innocence! He searched for it, and ultimately found two poor children playing with it, and restored it to its owner. There are many such incidents of false defamation. Śrī Kṛṣṇa could have ignored them, for He had nothing to gain or lose. However, when in a human body, the incarnation has to suffer pain and insult. Whatever joys there may be, are lessened by many sorrows. Any being with a human body has to pass through this. However, an incarnation is aware that, though with a human body, deep inside there is the fullness of divinity. The greatest moment in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's life came in the war-field of Kurukṣetra where he gave the message of the *Gītā* to humanity through Arjuna, and for which we remember him for these thousands of years.

Conclusion

What was Śrī Kṛṣṇa's intention in imparting this message to Arjuna? That will be the subject to deal with now. Why was Śrī Kṛṣṇa talking to Arjuna on a battlefield? Can He save the world? There is a single phrase in Śaṅkara's sloka-in-eng-last-line—*guṇādhikaiḥ hi gṛhītaḥ anuṣṭhīyamānaśca dharmaḥ pracayam gamiṣyati iti,* 'spiritual ideas spread when they are understood and practised by men and women of more than ordinary good qualities'; like lighting one lamp from another already lighted lamp, it slowly improves the moral and spiritual health of the community. Jesus says, 'a little leaven leavens the whole bread'. These ideas enter society slowly and ultimately change the society. How this happens we shall discuss now.

Śaṅkara continues:

Sa ca bhagavān jñāna aiśvarya-śakti-bala-vīrya-tejobhiḥ sadā sampannaḥ triguṇātmikām vaiṣṇavīm svām māyām mūlaprakṛtim vaśikṛtya, ajaḥ, avyayaḥ, bhūtānām īśvaraḥ, nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta-svabhāvo'api san, svamāyayā dehavān iva, jāta iva ca, lokānugraham kurvan lakṣyate. Svaprayojanābhāve'api bhūtānujighṛkṣayā vaidikam dharmadvayam arjunāya, śoka-moha-mahodadhau nimagnāya, upadideśa, guṇādhikaiḥ hi gṛhītaḥ anuṣṭhīyamānaśca dharmaḥ pracayam gamiṣyati iti. Tam dharmam bhagavatā yathopadiṣṭam vedavyāsaḥ sarvajñaḥ bhagavān Gītākhyaiḥ saptabhiḥ ślokaśataiḥ upanibabandha —

'That *Bhagavān,* who is ever in possession of knowledge, lordliness, power, strength, energy, and splendour, controlling his all-pervading Māyā or primordial nature with its three *guṇas* (*sattva, rajas,* and *tamas*), though Himself is unborn and immutable Lord of beings, and in essence eternally pure, awakened, and free, appearing through His *Māyā,* as if with a body and as if born, is seen as working for the welfare of the world. Though He has nothing to gain for Himself, in order to ensure welfare of beings, He imparted to Arjuna, who was submerged in an ocean of grief and delusion, the two-fold Vedic spiritual message (of action and contemplation) with the conviction that when it is received and understood and practised by people of more than ordinary virtues, it is bound to spread (like one lamp being lit from another lighted lamp). That *dharma* as expounded by Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa was converted into the celebrated *Gītā* by the omniscient Bhagavān Vedavyāsa in seven hundred verses.

Having said this about the genesis of the *Gītā*, Śaṅkara continues:

Tat idam Gītā-śāstram samasta-vedārtha-sāra-samgrahabhūtam durvijñeyārtham. Tadarthāviṣkaraṇāya anekaiḥ vivṛta-pada-padārtha-vākyārtha-nyāyam api atyanta viruddha anekārthatvena laukikaiḥ gṛhyamāṇam upalabhya, aham vivekataḥ artha-nirdhāraṇārtham samkṣepataḥ vivaraṇam kariṣyāmi —

'The science of the *Gītā* is the collection of the essence of all the teachings of the Vedas, but its meaning is difficult to grasp. Many have

attempted to explain its words, their meanings, and also their wholeness in a reasoned treatise. Men in general have got it as a mass of self-conflicting thoughts. Noting this predicament, I shall set forth its contents, briefly explaining the text with due discrimination.'…

Śaṅkara concludes his thoughtful Introduction with these words:

Imam dviprakāram dharmam niḥśreyasaprayojanam paramārtha-tattvam ca vāsudevākhyam param brahmābhidheyabhūtam viśeṣataḥ abhivyañjayat viśiṣṭaprayojana-sambandhābhidheyavat Gītā-śāstram. Yataḥ tadartha-vijñāne samasta-puruṣārtha-siddhiḥ ataḥ tadvivaraṇe yatnaḥ kriyate mayā —

'The science of the *Gītā*, thus elucidating specially the two-fold *dharma* (*pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*) of the Vedas, is aimed at spiritual freedom; it also sets forth the ultimate Truth that is known as Supreme Brahman, also as Vāsudeva (Śrī Kṛṣṇa); hence it is equipped with a specific objective, relation and content. Since knowing its meaning results in achieving all the values of life, I am making an effort to elucidate it.'

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 1

Arjuna-Viṣāda-Yoga
The Yoga of Arjuna's Grief

From today we begin the study of the text of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, beginning from chapter 1. This is a dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. How did we get it? There is a third character, Sañjaya, who was a minister of the Kauravas, of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the blind emperor. Bhagavan Vyasa gave a special blessing to Sañjaya that, though he will be sitting in the palace with the emperor, he will be able to see and hear what was going on in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. On account of this blessing, Sañjaya is reporting what all were happening in Kurukṣetra to the emperor Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who is anxious to know what was going on. And so, you find the first chapter beginning with a question by Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

धृतराष्ट्र उवाच –

Dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca—

'Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:'

धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सव:।
मामका: पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत सञ्जय॥१॥

Dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ;
Māmakaḥ pāndavāścaiva kimakurvata sañjaya — 1.1

'Tell me, O Sañjaya! Assembled in Kurukṣetra, the centre of religious activity, desirous to fight, what indeed did my people and the Pāṇḍavas do?'

Oh, Sañjaya, what did those people do in the *dharmakṣetra kurukṣetra*? Who are 'those people'? *samavetā yuyutsavaḥ*, 'people gathered there with a view to fight a battle'; *māmakāh pāndavāścaiva*, 'my people, Duryodhana and others, and those on the other side, Yudhisthira and the other Pāṇḍavas'. What did they do there?

Kurukṣetra is a town about 105 miles from Delhi, a very ancient place even at the time of the *Gītā*, and considered to be holy, *dharmakṣetra*. Even today millions of people gather there on very special occasions, and take bath in the lakes there. Today there is a university developing in that big city. That is Kurukṣetra, which is a *dharmakṣetra*—a place of *dharma*, a very holy place. In that Kurukṣetra, these two sides—my children and their people as well as Yudhisthira and his people—gathered there to fight this battle of Kurukṣetra. So, what did they do, is the question Dhṛtarāṣṭra is asking his minister, Sañjaya.

सञ्जय उवाच –

Sañjaya uvāca—

Sañjaya said:

दृष्ट्वा तु पाण्डवानीकं व्यूढं दुर्योधनस्तदा।
आचार्यमुपसङ्गम्य राजा वचनमब्रवीत्॥२॥

Dṛstvā tu pāṇḍavānīkam vyūḍham duryodhanaḥ tadā;
Ācāryamupasaṅgamya rājā vacanamabravīt — 1.2

'Then King Duryodhana, having seen the Pāṇḍava forces in battle-array, approached his teacher Droṇa, and spoke these words:'

King Duryodhana, i.e., Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son, having seen the Pāṇḍava forces in battle-array, approached his teacher Droṇa, who was a teacher of archery for both the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas, and spoke these words to him. Droṇa was highly respected like Bhīṣma; these are the two highly respected people in the Māhābhārata war.

पश्यैतां पाण्डुपुत्राणामाचार्य महतीं चमूम्।
व्यूढां द्रुपदपुत्रेण तव शिष्येण धीमता॥३॥

Paśyaitām pāṇḍuputrāṇām ācārya mahatim camūm;
Vyuḍhām drupada-putreṇa tava śiṣyeṇa dhīmatā— 1.3

'Behold, O Teacher! This mighty army of the sons of Pāṇḍu arrayed by the son of Drupada, thy gifted pupil.'

The son of Drupada referred to, is Dhṛṣṭadyumna, who was a gifted disciple of Droṇa himself. Details are then given.

अत्र शूरा महेष्वासा भीमार्जुनसमा युधि।
युयुधानो विराटश्च द्रुपदश्च महारथः॥४॥

Atra śūrā maheṣvāsā bhīmārjunasamā yudhi;
Yuyudhāno virāṭaśca drupadaśca mahārathaḥ — 1.4

धृष्टकेतुश्चेकितानः काशिराजश्च वीर्यवान्।
पुरुजित् कुन्तिभोजश्च शैब्यश्च नरपुङ्गवः॥५॥

Dhṛṣṭaketuścekitānaḥ kāśirājaśca vīryavān;
Purujit kuntibhojaśca śaibyaśca narapuṅgavaḥ — 1. 5

युधामन्युश्च विक्रान्त उत्तमौजाश्च वीर्यवान्।
सौभद्रो द्रौपदेयाश्च सर्व एव महारथाः॥६॥

Yudhāmanyuśca vikrānta uttamaujāśca vīryavān;
Saubhadro draupadeyāśca sarva eva mahārathāḥ —1.6

'Here are heroes, mighty archers, equal in battle to Bhīma and Arjuna—the great warriors Yuyudhāna, Virāta, Drupada; the valiant Dhṛṣṭaketu, Cekitāna, the heroic king of Kāśi; the best of men, Purujit, Kuntibhoja and Śaibya; the powerful Yudhāmanyu, and the brave Uttamaujas, the son of Subhadrā and the sons of Draupadi—lords of great chariots.'

King Duryodhana points out his own army to his teacher, Droṇa.

अस्माकं तु विशिष्टा ये तान्निबोध द्विजोत्तम।
नायका मम सैन्यस्य संज्ञार्थं तान् ब्रवीमि ते॥७॥

Asmākaṃ tu viśiṣhṭā ye tānnibodha dvijottama;
Nāyakā mama sainyasya samjñārthaṃ tān bravīmi te—1. 7

'Now let me tell you about our own army, O best among the twice-born. I shall tell you by their names, some of the outstanding heroes on our side.'

भवान् भीष्मश्च कर्णश्च कृपश्च समितिञ्जय:।
अश्वत्थामा विकर्णश्च सौमदत्तिर्जयद्रथ:॥८॥

Bhavān bhīṣmaśca karṇaśca kṛpaśca samitiñjayaḥ;
Aśvatthāmā vikarṇaśca saumadattiḥ jayadrathaḥ —1. 8

'First of all, you yourself, then, Bhīṣma, Karṇa, next, Kṛpa, victorious in war, Aśvatthama, Vikarṇa, Jayadratha, and the son of Somadatta.'

Karṇa is the eldest son of Kunti, the elder brother of Yudhisthira and the other Pāṇḍavas, but they did not then know this truth. That was a mystery. So, Karṇa joined the Kaurava party.

अन्ये च बहव: शूरा मदर्थे त्यक्तजीविता:।
नानाशस्त्रप्रहरणा: सर्वे युद्धविशारदा:॥९॥

Anye ca bahavaḥ śūrā madarthe tyaktajīvitāḥ;
Nānāśastra-praharaṇāḥ sarve yuddhaviśāradāḥ— 1. 9

'And many other heroes also, well-skilled in fight, armed with many weapons, are here, determined to lay down their lives for my sake.'

अपर्याप्तं तदस्माकं बलं भीष्माभिरक्षितम्।
पर्याप्तं त्विदमेतएषां बलं भीमाभिरक्षितम्॥१०॥

Aparyāptaṃ tadasmākaṃ balaṃ bhīṣmābhirakṣitam;
Paryāptaṃ tvidameteṣhāṃ balaṃ bhīmābhirakṣitam — 1. 10

'This, our army, defended by Bhīṣma, is innumerable, but that army of theirs, defended by Bhīma, is easy to number, i.e., is much less.'

अयनेषु च सर्वेषु यथाभागमवस्थिता:।
भीष्ममेवाभिरक्षन्तु भवन्त: सर्व एव हि॥११॥

Ayaneṣhu ca sarveṣu yathābhāgamavasthitāḥ;
Bhīṣmamevābhirakṣantu bhavantaḥ sarva eva hi — 1.11

'Now, do this, be stationed in your proper places in the divisions of the army, and support and protect Bhīṣma alone.'

Bhīṣma is the most important person. Anything adverse happening to him, will hurt us. So, it is to be seen that he is properly protected.

तस्य संजनयन्हर्षं कुरुवृद्धः पितामहः।
सिंहनादं विनद्योच्चैः शङ्खं दध्मौ प्रतापवान्॥१२॥

Tasya samjanayan harṣaṃ kuruvṛddhaḥ pitāmahaḥ;
Siṃhanādaṃ vinadyoccaiḥ śaṅkhaṃ dadhmau pratāpavān—1.12

'That oldest of the Kurus, Bhīṣma, the grand-sire, now sounded aloud a lion-roar and blew his conch, just to cheer up Duryodhana.'

Bhīṣma had taken a vow not to claim the throne for himself, though he was meant to become the king at that time, in order to please Satyavati, who was a fisher woman on the river Yamuna and the mother of sage Vyāsa, and allow her son to become the prince. So, Bhīṣma remained a celibate throughout his life; he is a man who keeps his word; so many times he was told n difficult situations to take up the throne. But he said, 'no, I don't want power.' So, Bhīṣma is considered to be a man of tremendous willpower, tremendous courage and tremendous wisdom. In the *Mahābhārata*, at the end of the war, he was lying wounded, as desired by him, on a bed of arrows. For several days he was in that condition, because he would not die till the sun started going northwards; that was January 14 or so. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and all the Pāṇḍavas went to him. Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked him to instruct the Pāṇḍavas, and that wonderful instruction is to be found in the *Santi parva* of the *Mahābhārata*—a series of discourses on politics and spirituality. It is a wonderful teaching. It is this Bhīṣma who is now facing the battle. After some days he will die in the battle, but as I said, he won't die, he will live on till the *uttarāyana* (when the sun goes northwards) begins. Then his cremation takes place. That is described in a big way in the *Mahābhārata*, and in that you will find exactly what we do today. When our Prime Minister Indira Gandhi died, she had a wonderful cremation in Delhi, a repetition of what happened in the war time.

ततः शङ्खाश्च भेर्यश्च पणवानकगोमुखाः।
सहसैवाभ्यहन्यन्त स शब्दस्तुमुलोऽभवत्॥१३॥

Tataḥ śaṅkhāśca bheryaśca paṇavānakagomukhāḥ;
Sahasaivābhyahanyanta sa śabdastumulo'bhavat — 1.13

'As soon as Bhīṣma blew his conch, all others started: all the various instruments sounded just to create a kind of atmosphere for energizing the army; conches, kettle-drums, tabors, trumpets, cow-horns blared forth suddenly from the Kaurava side, and the noise was tremendous.'

ततः श्वेतैर्हयैर्युक्ते महति स्यन्दने स्थितौ।
माधवः पाण्डवश्चैव दिव्यौ शङ्खौ प्रदध्मतुः॥१४॥

Tataḥ śvetairhayairyukte mahati syandane sthitau;
Mādhavaḥ pāṇḍavaścaiva divyau śaṅkhau pradadhmatuḥ—1. 14

'Then, Mādhava, i.e., Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and Pāṇḍava, i.e., Arjuna, stationed in their magnificent chariot yoked with white horses, blew their divine conches.'

पाञ्चजन्यं हृषीकेशो देवदत्तं धनञ्जयः।
पौण्ड्रं दध्मौ महाशङ्खं भीमकर्मा वृकोदरः॥१५॥

Pāñcajanyaṃ hṛṣīkeśo devadattaṃ dhanañjayaḥ;
Pauṇḍraṃ dadhmau mahāśaṅkhaṃ bhīmakarmā vṛkodaraḥ—1.15

'Hṛṣīkeśa, i.e., Śrī Kṛṣṇa, blew the *Pāñcajanya*; Dhanañjaya, i.e., Arjuna, blew the conch called *Devadatta*; and Vṛkodara, the doer of terrific deeds, i.e., Bhīma, blew his large conch *Pauṇḍra*.'

अनन्तविजयं राजा कुन्तीपुत्रो युधिष्ठिरः।
नकुलः सहदेवश्च सुघोषमणिपुष्पकौ॥१६॥

Anantavijayaṃ rājā kuntīputro yudhiṣṭhiraḥ;
Nakulaḥ sahadevaśca sughoṣamaṇipuṣpakau — 1. 16

'King Yudhisthira, son of Kunti, blew the conch named *Anantavijaya*; and Nakula and Sahadeva blew their *Sughoṣa* and *Manipuṣpaka* conches.'

काश्यश्च परमेष्वास: शिखण्डी च महारथ:।
धृष्टद्युम्नो विराटश्च सात्यकिश्चापराजित:॥१७॥

Kāśyaśca parameṣvāsaḥ śikhaṇḍī ca mahārathaḥ;
Dhṛṣṭadyumno virāṭaśca sātyakiścāparājitaḥ— 1.17

'The expert bow-man, the king of Kāśi, and the great chariot warrior Śikhaṇḍī, Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Virāṭa, and the unconquered Satyaki.'

द्रुपदो द्रौपदेयाश्च सर्वश: पृथिवीपते।
सौभद्रश्च महाबाहु: शङ्खान्दध्मु: पृथक् पृथक्॥१८॥

Drupado draupadeyāśca sarvaśaḥ pṛthivīpate;
Saubhadraśca mahābāhuḥ śaṅkhāndadhmuḥ pṛthakpṛthak—1.18

'O Lord of the earth (meaning Dhṛtarāṣṭra)! Drupada and the sons of Draupadi, and the mighty-armed son of Subhadrā, each, blew his own conch.'

स घोषो धार्तराष्ट्राणां हृदयानि व्यदारयत्।
नभश्च पृथिवीं चैव तुमुलोऽभ्यनुनादयन्॥१९॥

Sa ghoṣo dhārtarāṣṭrāṇāṃ hṛdayāni vyadārayat;
Nabhaśca pṛthivīṃ caiva tumulo'bhyanunādayan —1. 19

'That terrific noise, resounding throughout the heaven and earth, rent the hearts of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's party because of its tremendous efficacy.'

अथ व्यवस्थितान् दृष्ट्वा धार्तराष्ट्रान् कपिध्वज:।
प्रवृत्ते शस्त्रसंपाते धनुरुद्यम्य पाण्डव: ।
हृषीकेशं तदा वाक्यमिदमाह महीपते॥२०॥

Atha vyavasthitān dṛṣṭvā dhārtarāṣṭrān kapidhvajaḥ;
Pravṛtte śastrasampāte dhanurudyamya pāṇḍavaḥ—1. 20
Hṛṣīkeśaṃ tadā vākyamidamāha mahīpate;

'Then, O Lord of the earth! Seeing Dhṛtarāṣṭra's party, standing marshalled and the shooting about to begin, that Pāṇḍava (Arjuna), whose

ensign was the monkey, i.e., Hanuman on his flag, raising his bow, said the following words to Kṛṣṇa.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's part in the war was merely as a charioteer; He never took part in the battle. Now, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna are coming into the picture.

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca—

'Arjuna said:'

सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये रथं स्थापय मेऽच्युत॥२१॥

यावदेतान्निरीक्षेऽहं योद्धुकामानवस्थितान्।
कैर्मया सह योद्धव्यमस्मिन्रणसमुद्यमे॥२२॥

Senayorubhayormadhye rathaṃ sthāpaya me'cyuta —1. 21
Yāvadetānnirīkṣe'haṃ yoddhukāmān avasthitān;
Kairmayā saha yoddhavyamasmin raṇasamudyame—1. 22

'Please place my chariot, O Acyuta, i.e., Śrī Kṛṣṇa, between the two armies, that I may see those who stand here prepared for war. On the eve of this battle, let me know with whom I am to fight.'

योत्स्यमानानवेक्षेऽहं य एतेऽत्र समागता:।
धार्तराष्ट्रस्य दुर्बुद्धेर्युद्धे प्रियचिकीर्षव:॥२३॥

Yotsyamānān avekṣe'haṃ ya ete'tra samāgatāḥ;
Dhārtarāṣṭrasya durbuddheryuddhe priyacikīrṣavaḥ—1. 23

'For, I desire to observe those who are assembled here for fight, wishing to please the evil-minded Duryodhana by taking his side on this battle-field.'

सञ्जय उवाच –

Sañjaya uvāca—

Sañjaya said:

एवमुक्तो हृषीकेशो गुडाकेशेन भारत।
सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये स्थापयित्वा रथोत्तमम्॥२४॥

Evamukto hṛṣīkeśo guḍākeśena bhārata;
Senayorubhayormadhye sthāpayitvā rathottamam—1. 24

भीष्मद्रोणप्रमुखत: सर्वेषां च महीक्षिताम्।
उवाच पार्थ पश्यैतान्समवेतान् कुरूनिति॥२५॥

Bhīṣmadroṇapramukhataḥ sarveṣāṃ ca mahīkṣitām;
Uvāca pārtha paśyaitānsamavetān kurūniti— 1. 25

'O Bhārata i.e., Dhṛtarāṣṭra, commanded thus by Guḍākeśa i.e., Arjuna, Hṛṣīkeśa, i.e., Śrī Kṛṣṇa, drove that grandest of chariots to a place between the two armies facing Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and all the rulers of the earth, and then spoke thus to Arjuna: "Behold Arjuna, all the Kurus gathered together."'

तत्रापश्यत् स्थितान् पार्थ पितृनथ पितामहान्।
आचार्यान् मातुलान् भ्रातृन् पुत्रान् पौत्रान् सखींस्तथा॥२६॥
श्वशुरान् सुहृदश्चैव सेनयोरुभयोरपि।

Tatrāpaśyat sthitān pārthaḥ pitṛīnatha pitāmahān;
Ācāryān mātulān bhrātṛīn putrān pautrān sakhīṃstathā—1. 26
śvaśurān suhṛdaścaiva senayorubhayorapi;

'Then Arjuna saw, stationed in front of him, in both the armies, his own relatives, grandfathers, fathers-in-law, uncles, brothers, cousins, his own, and their sons and grandsons, and comrades and teachers, and other friends as well.'

That is the critical moment of the whole war situation.

तान् समीक्ष्य स कौन्तेय: सर्वान्बन्धूनवस्थितान्॥२७॥
कृपया परयाविष्टो विषीदन्निदमब्रवीत्।

Tān samīkṣya sa kaunteyaḥ sarvān bandhūn avasthitān—1. 27
Kṛpayā parayāviṣṭo viṣīdannidamabravīt;

'Then he, the son of Kunti, i.e., Arjuna, seeing all those kinsmen stationed in their ranks, spoke thus with sorrow, filled with deep pity.'

In many battles, especially in civil wars, you are fighting with your own people. In the American civil war, how many people fought against their own kinsmen! Our friends are there on the other side, that is the nature of all civil wars. And this was more than a civil war. It was a family war—the same family, Kauravas on one side and the Pāṇḍavas on the other. All their comrades joined together. And Arjuna's own teachers were there. Now comes the very tragic situation facing Arjuna, and Arjuna is giving expression to his great grief. This chapter is called the Yoga of the Grief of Arjuna, *Arjuna-viśāda- yoga. Viśāda* is grief. That also is a *yoga*, because of that grief comes great development. We begin to think; we begin to discriminate. You ask for advice, you want some philosophy to guide you. So, this is also called a *yoga—Arjuna-viśāda-yoga*.

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca—

'Arjuna said:'

दृष्ट्वेमं स्वजनं कृष्ण युयुत्सुं समुपस्थितम्॥२८॥
सीदन्ति मम गात्राणि मुखं च परिशुष्यति।
वेपथुश्च शरीरे मे रोमहर्षश्च जायते॥२९॥
गाण्डीवं स्रंसते हस्तात्त्वक् चैव परिदह्यते।

Dṛṣṭvemaṃ svajanaṃ kṛṣṇa yuyutsuṃ samupasthitam—1. 28
Sīdanti mama gātrāṇi mukhaṃ ca pariśuṣyati;
Vepathuśca śarīre me romaharṣaśca jāyate — 1. 29
Gāṇḍīvaṃ sraṃsate hastāt tvak caiva paridahyate;

'Seeing, O Kṛṣṇa, these my kinsmen, gathered here eager for fight, my limbs fail me, my mouth is parched up, I shiver all over my body; my hair stands on end; the bow, Gāṇḍīva, slips from my hands; and my skin burns.'

Arjuna is in a very difficult situation, he is highly worked up in his nerves.

न च शक्नोम्यवस्थातुं भ्रमतीव च मे मनः॥३०॥
निमित्तानि च पश्यामि विपरीतानि केशव।

Na ca śaknomyavasthātuṃ bhramatīva ca me manaḥ—1. 30
Nimittāni ca paśyāmi viparītāni keśava;

'Neither, O Keśava (another name for Śrī Kṛṣṇa), can I stand upright. My mind is in a whirl. And I see adverse omens as well.'

A very picturesque description of a very serious nervous condition—when you are confused, when you are full of fear, full of tension—is very beautifully pictured in these verses.

न च श्रेयोऽनुपश्यामि हत्वा स्वजनमाहवे॥३१॥
न कांक्षे विजयं कृष्ण न च राज्यं सुखानि च।

Na ca śreyo'nupaśyāmi hatvā svajanamāhave — 1. 31
Na kāṅkṣe vijayaṃ kṛṣṇa na ca rājyaṃ sukhāni ca;

'Neither do I see any good, O Kṛṣṇa, in killing these, my own people, in battle. I desire neither victory, nor empire, nor even pleasure.'

किं नो राज्येन गोविन्द किं भोगैर्जीवितेन वा॥३२॥
येषामर्थे कांक्षितं नो राज्यं भोगाः सुखानि च।
त इमेऽवस्थिता युद्धे प्राणांस्त्यक्त्वा धनानि च॥३३॥
आचार्याः पितरः पुत्रास्तथैव च पितामहाः।
मातुलाः श्वशुराः पौत्राः श्यालाः संबन्धिनस्तथा॥३४॥

Kiṃ no rājyena govinda kiṃ bhogairjīvitena vā — 1. 32
Yeṣāmarthe kāṅkṣitaṃ no rājyaṃ bhogāḥ sukhāni ca;
Ta ime'vasthitā yuddhe prāṇāṃstyaktvā dhanāni ca —1. 33
Ācāryāḥ pitaraḥ putrāstathaiva ca pitāmahāḥ;
Mātulāḥ śvaśurāḥ pautrāḥ śyālāḥ sambandhinastathā —1. 34

'Of what avail is dominion to us, of what avail are pleasures and even life, if these, O Govinda! for whose sake it is desired that empire, enjoyment, and pleasure should be ours, themselves stand here in battle, having renounced life and wealth: who are they?, teachers, uncles, sons, grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law, besides other kinsmen.'

All these are mentioned in the three verses, 32 to 34. So, Arjuna is in a very difficult situation. The remaining verses are going to tell us the deeper crises into which Arjuna entered at that time.

एतान्न हन्तुमिच्छामि घ्नतोऽपि मधुसूदन।
अपि त्रैलोक्यराज्यस्य हेतो: किं नु महीकृते॥३५॥

Etānna hantumicCāmi ghnato'pi madhusūdana;
Api trailokyarājyasya hetoḥ kiṃ nu mahīkṛte — 1. 35

'Even though these were to kill me, O Slayer of Madhu i.e., Śrī Kṛṣṇa, I could not wish to kill them—not even for the sake of dominion over the three worlds, how much less for the sake of this earth!'

Arjuna is now in a definite mood to withdraw from battle, because of these emotional considerations.

निहत्य धार्तराष्ट्रान्न: का प्रीति: स्याज्जनार्दन।
पापमेवाश्रयेदस्मान्हत्वैतानाततायिन:॥३६॥

Nihatya dhārtarāṣṭrānnaḥ kā prītiḥ syājjanārdana;
Pāpamevāśrayedasmān hatvaitān ātatāyinaḥ — 1. 36

'What pleasure, indeed, could be ours, O Kṛṣṇa, from killing these sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra? Sin only would take hold of us by the slaying of these felons.'

They are certainly felons. They have done so many evils. They have tried to burn away all the Pāṇḍavas at one time. In spite of that, I find no fun in engaging in this war.

तस्मान्नार्हा वयं हन्तुं धार्तराष्ट्रान् स्वबान्धवान्।
स्वजनं हि कथं हत्वा सुखिनः स्याम माधव॥३७॥

Tasmānnārhā vayaṃ hantuṃ dhārtarāṣṭrānsvabāndhavān;
Svajanaṃ hi kathaṃ hatvā sukhinaḥ syāma mādhava—1. 37

'Therefore, we are not fit to kill our kindred, the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. How could we, O Kṛṣṇa, gain happiness by the slaying of our own kinsmen?'

यद्यप्येते न पश्यन्ति लोभोपहतचेतसः।
कुलक्षयकृतं दोषं मित्रद्रोहे च पातकम्॥३८॥

कथं न ज्ञेयमस्माभिः पापादस्मान्निवर्तितुम्।
कुलक्षयकृतं दोषं प्रपश्यद्भिर्जनार्दन ॥३९॥

Yadyapyete na paśyanti lobhopahatacetasaḥ;
Kulakṣayakṛtaṃ doṣaṃ mitradrohe ca pātakam — 1. 38

Kathaṃ na jneyamasmābhiḥ pāpādasmānnivartitum;
Kulakṣayakṛtaṃ doṣaṃ prapaśyadbhirjanārdana—1. 39

'Though these Kauravas assembled in front of me do not understand this truth because of their overpowering greed, there is sin in hostility to friends. Why should not we, Oh Janardana, who clearly see this evil leading to the decay of families and societies, turn away from this sin?' This war will lead to tire decay of society, break-up of family, resulting in so many widows, so many orphans. All these evils come from war. These Kauravas do not know these consequences, but we know it. Since, we know it, why should we proceed in this matter?

कुलक्षये प्रणश्यन्ति कुलधर्माः सनातनाः।
धर्मे नष्टे कुलं कृत्स्नमधर्मोऽभिभवत्युत॥४०॥

Kulakṣaye praṇaśyanti kuladharmāḥ sanātanāḥ;
Dharme naṣṭe kulaṃ kṛtsnamadharmo'bhibhavatyuta—1. 40

'On the decay of the family, the memorial religious rites of the family die out. The culture enshrined in the family dies out. On the destruction of social values, impiety further overwhelms the whole family.'

Evils come in from war. We are able to realize it today. How many evils lurk in battles, in conflicts, in tension? Arjuna is giving reasons for his desire to withdraw from the battle ahead of him. And so he again says:

अधर्माभिभवात् कृष्ण प्रदुष्यन्ति कुलस्त्रियः।
स्त्रीषु दुष्टासु वार्ष्णेय जायते वर्णसङ्करः॥४१॥

Adharmābhibhavāt kṛṣṇa praduṣyanti kulastriyaḥ;
Strīṣu duṣṭāsu vārṣṇeya jāyate varṇasaṅkaraḥ — 1. 41

'Whenever there is a big war, how many widows and orphans are created thereby! On the prevalence of impiety, when social values go away, the women of the family become corrupt because of this terrible situation. And when anything adverse happens to our women, the whole society suffers. There will be lot of corruption in society.'

सङ्करो नरकायैव कुलघ्नानां कुलस्य च।
पतन्ति पितरो ह्येषां लुप्तपिण्डोदकक्रियाः॥४२॥

Saṅkaro narakāyaiva kulaghnānāṃ kulasya ca;
Patanti pitaro hyeṣāṃ luptapiṇḍodakakriyāḥ — 1. 42

'Social disintegration will land in hell the family and the destroyers of the family. Their ancestors will become deprived of the ritual offerings of rice-balls and water.'

That is what we do in a funeral—those who are dead, parents and others, we honour them with such offerings. That is called the funeral ceremony. In every society, there is some form of this ceremony; we call it *śrāddhā*, in the Indian tradition. All this becomes difficult to perform, and so there is a thorough confusion in society.

दोषैरेतैः कुलघ्नानां वर्णसङ्करकारकै :।
उत्साद्यन्ते जातिधर्माः कुलधर्माश्च शाश्वताः॥४३॥

Doṣairetaiḥ kulaghnānāṃ varṇasaṅkarakārakaiḥ;
Utsādyante jātidharmāḥ kuladharmāśca śāśvatāḥ —1. 43

'By these misdeeds of destroying the families, bringing about confusion in society, class, and caste, the memorial rites of the class and the family get destroyed.'

उत्सन्नकुलधर्माणां मनुष्याणां जनार्दन।
नरके नियतं वासो भवतीत्यनुशुश्रुम॥४४॥

Utsannakuladharmāṇāṃ manuṣyāṇāṃ janārdana;
Narake niyataṃ vāso bhavatītyanuśuśruma — 1. 44

'We have heard, O Kṛṣṇa, that inevitable is the dwelling in hell of those men and women in whose families religious practices have become destroyed.'

अहो बत महत्पापं कर्तुं व्यवसिता वयम्।
यद्राज्यसुखलोभेन हन्तुं स्वजनमुद्यता:॥४५॥

Aho bata mahatpāpaṃ kartuṃ vyavasitā vayam;
Yadrājyasukhalobhena hantuṃ svajanamudyatāḥ—1. 45

'Alas! We are preparing to involve ourselves in a great sin, in that we are prepared to slay our kinsmen out of the greed of the pleasures of a kingdom.'

यदि मामप्रतीकारमशस्त्रं शस्त्रपाणय:।
धार्तराष्ट्रा रणे हन्युस्तन्मे क्षेमतरं भवेत्॥४६॥

Yadi māmapratīkāramaśastraṃ śastrapāṇayaḥ;
Dhārtarāṣṭrā raṇe hanyustanme kṣemataraṃ bhavet—1. 46

'If the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, i.e., the Kauravas, with weapons in hand, were to kill me, unresistant, unarmed, in the battle, that would be better for me.'

Arjuna is now definitely giving his final verdict on the situation to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He wants to adopt perfect unqualified non-violence. A critical

situation indeed; war is about to begin, Arjuna had prepared himself for it, he wanted it, and yet at this critical moment Arjuna withdraws, giving ultimatum of that withdrawal to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, because he is so overwhelmed by sorrow, by dejection. What did Śrī Kṛṣṇa say? Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave—we will see it in the second chapter of the *Gītā*—answers to all these utterances of Arjuna. But here Sañjaya reports what happened at this point of time:

सञ्जय उवाच –

Sañjaya uvāca—

Sañjaya said:

एवमुक्त्वाऽर्जुनः संख्ये रथोपस्थ उपाविशत्।
विसृज्य सशरं चापं शोकसंविग्नमानसः॥४७॥

Evamuktvārjunaḥ saṅkhye rathopastha upāviśat;
Visṛjya saśaraṃ cāpaṃ śokasaṃvignamānasaḥ — 1. 47

'Speaking thus in the midst of the battle-field, Arjuna, casting away his bow and arrows, sank down on the seat of his chariot with his mind distressed with sorrow.'

Delusion, grief, sorrow. This is how the first chapter ends. Here is a picture of Arjuna in this critical situation, in the midst of the battle when it is just about to begin. He withdraws, saying 'I don't want to fight', and he gives very good arguments of kindness, of compassion, and non-violence—far superior to what we understand by non-violence. Several people ask this question: 'Was not Arjuna superior to all the other people in that battle-field? He spoke of non-violence. Non-violence is a great virtue.' This we shall discuss when we begin the second chapter. But Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say that non-violence is not a virtue in every case. Non-violence must be of a strong variety, a bold variety, a positive variety. This kind of teaching will come from Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna later on in the *Gītā*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa asks: 'Wherefrom has this dejection come upon you at this difficult situation?' It is a nervous breakdown, as it were, in the case of Arjuna. The body is shivering, mind is whirling. What is all this? A real virtue is a virtue based on strength, based on fearlessness. This is not virtue. Something has happened to the human mind. It has become unnerved as it were. A bold, courageous man, like

Arjuna, behaves like a coward here on the battlefield. This is how Śrī Kṛṣṇa viewed Arjuna's situation: full of sympathy for him, but not accepting his arguments. That is how the first chapter ends.

इति अर्जुनविषादयोगो नाम प्रथमोऽध्यायः ।

Iti arjuna-visāda-yogo nāma prathamo'dhyāyaḥ —

Thus, ends the first chapter entitled *arjuna-viṣada-yoga*, the yoga of Arjuna's grief, well portrayed in this chapter.

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 2

Sāṅkhya-Yoga
Sāṅkhya and Yoga

We left Arjuna, in the last verse of the first chapter, sunk in the chariot, completely depressed. The language used in the last verse is very very expressive of this situation. The chapter itself is called Arjuna's grief or depression, *Arjuna-viṣāda-yoga.* In the last śloka of chapter 1, Sañjaya had said, *Evamuktvārjunaḥ samkhye rathopastha upāviśat,* 'having said so in the midst of the battlefield, Arjuna sat down in the chariot; he sank into the chariot'. Generally, when they fight, they stand up; that was the custom in those days. Standing up and fighting; sitting down means no more fighting. *Visṛjya saśaram cāpam,* throwing away his bow and arrows. That is complete negation of the purpose for which he had come there. *Śoka samvigna mānasaḥ,* 'with the mind immersed in *śoka,* or, grief or dejection'. That was the state of Arjuna as described in the last verse.

Now we begin the second chapter. How did Śrī Kṛṣṇa react to this state of Arjuna's mind, and the various arguments Arjuna gave for wanting to run away from the field of battle? Some of the arguments appeal to us also. All over the world today nobody likes war. So, in Australia, America and Europe, people ask me this question: 'Arjuna seems to be better than Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He wants to have peace, he does not want war. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is egging him on to war. How can we accept this situation?'

I said that is correct. Arjuna is speaking of peace, non-violence, compassion, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is asking Arjuna to give up these values and fight. But, what does that mean? What is the state of Arjuna's mind? Is there any virtue in Arjuna's state of mind? Is virtue weakness? Is virtue nervous breakdown? We have to ask these questions. Virtue is strong. It is made of 'stern stuff', in the language of Shakespeare. That stern stuff you do not find in Arjuna in that condition. He is only invoking these wonderful ideas of love, compassion, non-violence, etc. But his own condition was

very pitiable, what you call these days, a psychic breakdown. Śrī Kṛṣṇa looked at him, and as the book says, with a smile, and began to speak to him. How to restore this man to his own true state of mind? He was not like this, but this state of depression, this weakness, has come upon him just now. Virtue must be made of sterner stuff. Character must be made of sterner stuff. Non-violence must also be made of sterner stuff. Even Mahatma Gandhi would say, 'I don't like the non-violence of the coward. Non-violence of the brave alone is non-violence.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa looked at Arjuna, and in two famous verses debunked him; Śrī Kṛṣṇa showed to Arjuna that whatever he thought was right, was not right. One cannot judge oneself rightly with a sick, grief-stricken mind. A grief-stricken mind loses discrimination. One must be calm and steady. Then one will understand one's situation better. And so, this part of the second chapter is very vital in the study of the *Gītā*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is teaching us not to run away from the battle of life. It is easy to run away. We can produce various arguments, and many do this. Suppose one has trouble at home; he simply runs away to Benares. Some people then say of him, you are wonderful, so full of renunciation. But, Śrī Kṛṣṇa won't say so. You are a weakling, you are not doing your own duty. You are escaping from all this. There is a spirit of manliness in human beings; that should not be forgotten. So, all these various life situations come to us, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and today Swami Vivekananda, asks us to face up to these problems. Bring up new energies from within. In this way, a positive attitude develops in us, and the mind is made stable and steady to see things clearly. What is your duty at a particular time?, you must be able to find out this. Arjuna was confused. He was dejected; in that condition his judgement had no value at all. And so, Sañjaya begins the second chapter with this statement.

सञ्जय उवाच —

Sañjaya uvāca—

'Sañjaya said:'

तं तथा कृपयाविष्टमश्रुपूर्णाकुलेक्षणम्।
विषीदन्तमिदं वाक्यमुवाच मधुसूदनः॥१॥

Tam tathā kṛpayāviṣṭamaśrupūrṇākulekṣaṇam;
Viṣīdantamidam vākyamuvāca madhusūdanaḥ — 2. 1

Madhusūdanaḥ *uvāca*, 'Madhusūdana said', that means Śrī Kṛṣṇa said; *Idam vākyam*, 'this utterance' Śrī Kṛṣṇa made. What Śrī Kṛṣṇa said is found in the next two verses. But He said this to whom?, to Arjuna. What kind of Arjuna?, *viṣīdantam*, 'deeply grieving'; *kṛpayāviṣṭam*, 'overwhelmed with pity'; Arjuna was in a pitiable condition. Further, *aśrupūrṇākulekṣaṇam*, 'tears were streaming from the eyes of Arjuna'. These are not the signs of stability or courage or strength.

To that kind of Arjuna, Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke these words. You can see the abnormal state of Arjuna's mind. It was highly pathological, not healthy. A healthy mind won't be like this. That is what we have to learn first. Weeping and wailing on facing some problem is not a healthy condition. Certainly, if the problems are too much beyond our control, then we shall have to weep and wail. But if you can, you must try to face up to these problems. There are occasions when you cannot face a problem. And Vivekananda says in one place, 'I shall either fight the problem or take recourse to flight'. There is no harm in flying away, provided you have done your best to face up to it. This is the positive attitude. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to convey this attitude to Arjuna, and then, in the context of this, he will be expounding a wonderful philosophy of life for all people. Some of our own people would have said to Arjuna, what you said is correct, go home, wear some poor dress, and take *bhikṣā* from house to house and live an ascetic's life. But running away from problems will not be a solution, for problems will be chasing you. You have to face up to them some time or the other. That wonderful idea is coming in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's two verses in reply.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'Śrī Kṛṣṇa said:'

कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपस्थितम्।
अनार्यजुष्टमस्वर्ग्यमकीर्तिकरमर्जुन॥२॥

Kutastvā kaśmalamidam viṣame samupasthitam;

Anāryajuṣṭamasvargyamakīrtikaram arjuna — 2. 2

This is simple Sanskrit, full of meaning: *kutastvā, kutaḥ* means wherefrom, *tvā* means, to you, wherefrom has come to you; *kaśmalam,* 'this very low attitude', *kaśmala* is the Sanskrit word signifying all that is bad. *Viṣame samupasthitam,* 'in this most difficult situation' you have brought up this kind of argument and developed this attitude. In the midst of the two armies, the battle is about to begin; at this moment you say, 'no, I cannot. I am going away. I am going to Hṛiṣīkeśa. *Anāryajuṣṭam,* 'a noble-minded person will never take to this attitude.'

ārya is not a race; *ārya* means a noble-minded person. The word *ārya* is often confused with a race. In the beginning, Western historians propounded this theory of the *āryan* race. That developed into Hitler's *āryan* superiority. And when Hitler died, the *āryan* race theory also died! But the word *ārya* is used in Sanskrit always for the noble-minded person. Take any Sanskrit drama. The person will address another character as 'My dear *ārya,* noble-minded person'. And Buddha spoke of his teachings as *ārya-satyāni,* Noble Truths. Noble is the word for *ārya* there. The four Noble Truths, *ārya Satyāni.* So, the word *ārya* was used by Buddha, as also by earlier Vedic literature. And this word *ārya* is, therefore, a very great word in Sanskrit. Be an *āryan* means, be noble-minded. Don't be petty, don't be small. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa calls it, *anāryajuṣṭam,* the attitude you have adopted 'is not adopted by *āryas'.* Only ignoble people, those who are not *ārya,* have your attitude. *Asvargyam,* 'it won't give you any glory either in heaven or on earth'; you won't have any glory thereby. *Akīrtikaram,* 'also it brings you bad name', ill fame. Arjuna was a great warrior; he has fallen a prey to weakness. His name will suffer in the world. These three words, *Anāryajuṣṭam, asvargyam, akīrtikaram* acted as shock treatment to Arjuna. In cases of mental breakdown, the patient is given shock treatment. So, here is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's shock treatment to Arjuna. Arjuna never expected that. He expected that Śrī Kṛṣṇa would pat on his back: Arjuna, you have done well. You are *such* a noble soul, having compassion on everybody, you don't want to kill anybody. You would rather be a mendicant than be a fighter. All this that was expected by Arjuna did not come from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He scolds him, gives him this kind of shock treatment. This verse gives the negative

approach. Now comes the positive approach. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling him in the next verse:

क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते।
क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परन्तप॥३॥

Klaibyam māsma gamaḥ pārtha naitat tvayi upapadyate;
Kṣudram hṛdayadaurbalyam tyaktvottiṣṭha parantapa —2. 3

This is a powerful verse. *Klaibyam,* means chicken-heartedness, you can say, weakness, absolutely no strength, no manliness in it. *Mā sma gamaḥ pārtha,* 'don't fall a prey O Arjuna' to this meanness, this chicken-heartedness. Why?, *naitattvayyupapadyate,* 'this does not befit you'. You are so heroic, you are so noble, you are so great. This behaviour does not befit you. What a wonderful idea! Whenever I read this part of the verse, I like this wonderful sentiment fit for telling children, it does not befit you, you are so good, you are so noble. The way you behave does not befit you. *That will bring the best out of a person*. So, this approach of *naitattvayyupapadyate,* 'it does not befit you', can be an educational maxim for parents and teachers with respect to children, and generally also for men and women when they deal with each other: 'this behaviour does not befit you'. That means, you respect the person, he or she has forgotten his or her true nature, and is doing something below his or her dignity. So, this appeal is a positive appeal. It has the power to evoke the best in you, the best in the listener. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna, this is not your true form. Some *Māyā* has come upon your mind. This weakness, this dejection, what is called nervous breakdown, that is not your true form. When we have a nervous breakdown, how weak we become, like a baby.

I had to deal with a very close friend, a Principal of an Engineering College, a noble-minded person, highly respected by all the students and teachers, when I was in Karachi. He got a nervous breakdown. His condition was like that of a baby, absolutely no strength, no energy, no courage. Can't meet anybody. He won't go to college, he will live at home. I took him in the car, took him to the Engineering College, made him sit on the Principal's chair; you run this college, you are such a great soul, so noble. As soon as I left, he also left and came and sat in his house. He

couldn't meet anybody. But after six months everything changed. All strength came back. That was just like a cloud coming over the sun, a temporary cloud. The real man came out again. The same wonderful work went on. He built and developed two more Engineering Colleges in India. Later on, he passed away very peacefully.

With nervous breakdown you become a nobody, your old self is dead. Actually it is not dead; it is there, it is clouded by this weakness that has come. And so we go to a psychiatrist; he deals with us and somehow he puts us into a good condition. We see this happening everyday. This concept that man is essentially Divine, all this weakness that you experience is not your true form, there is something profound about you—that is the basic Vedantic teaching. That is why when Vivekananda was asked in America during the question hour: Swami, are you not preaching some kind of hypnotism in the name of Vedanta—just hypnotising people, Swamiji immediately replied with a smile, 'No, sir, I am de-hypnotising people. They are already hypnotised. They say, 'I am white', 'I am black', 'I am this', 'I am that', all that is false. You are the infinite Atman, one with all; that is your true dimension. *Tattvamasi, tattvamasi*, 'You are That, You are That', not this tiny organic system—there is something profound about you.

So, all education has this quality: it de-hypnotises you. Some weakness has come and it has obstructed your true form. You are essentially strong. How do you know, how many varieties of energies and strengths are within you! You don't know. Therefore, don't despair. You can get out of this difficulty. There is strength hidden within you. That is the positive attitude Vedanta proclaims to everyone. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa stands on that pedestal, and then addresses Arjuna. He says, *naitattvayyupadyate* 'it does not befit you'. It is just a temporary aberration, a little cloud has come there and the sun has become dark. The sun is still there; the cloud will go away and the sun will shine once again. That is how you have to deal with human weaknesses. We are not essentially weak. We are essentially strong. But when we don't realize this truth, we weep repeatedly over every problem, like children for example. The child's only language is weeping; nothing else is there. Even grownups become like children. Swami Vivekananda's diagnosis of India during the last several centuries is a nation constantly

weeping, weeping, weeping. Then he said (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 3, p. 224):

'We have wept long enough. No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men.'

This is a famous passage in Vivekananda's teaching. The whole nation has been weeping for centuries with a sense of inadequacy with respect to our environment. We did not know our own strength. Slowly that is changing. Yes, problems are there; but we shall find the way to deal with all these. In this way, that weeping state of India is changing now. No more weeping. We shall have to manifest our strength, face up to these problems.

I went to Jakarta in 1963–64, at the time of Vivekananda's Birth Centenary, and at that time Doctor Sukarno, President, wrote a foreword to a book on Vivekananda in the Indonesian language, *Svara Vivekananda. Svara* in Sanskrit means sound; in Indonesian language it means words, words of Vivekananda or sayings of Vivekananda. Sukarno wrote the introduction and he was having a one-hour T.V session to release that book. Indian Ambassador, Appa Pant , was there as my host. In that introduction occurs this wonderful passage. Sukarno was deeply influenced by Swamiji's ideas from his young days. He always kept the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* in his bed room. And he told me, you can go to the bed room, you will find all the volumes are there. I read a page or two everyday, he said. So, in that passage in the foreword, he says:

'Swami Vivekananda, ah! What a name! He was the one who taught me how to love my people, how to love my country, how to love the whole world. He was the one who said, "We have wept long enough. No more weeping now, but stand on your feet and be men". Yours, Sukarno.' That is the introduction. That book was in English as well as in the Indonesian language.

So, this attitude, which Śrī Kṛṣṇa expressed then, found a new expression in our time in Swami Vivekananda, and Swamiji loved these two verses very much. In his discourse on the *Gītā*, he says, if you can understand the spirit of these two verses, you understand the spirit of the whole *Gītā*. This presents a strong philosophy meant to make heroes out of

clay. This spirit must be captured by us. We could do so, we all read the *Gītā*, but we did not catch the spirit of this powerful message. Now Swamiji has come and given us the same message of strength, facing up to the problems. And in his lectures in England and America on *Jñāna Yoga*, he referred to this particular truth in terms of his own experience.

During his *parivrājaka* (wandering) days in India, somewhere in Benares or so, he was chased by a number of monkeys. He had been moving about as a wandering monk, going all through India. A number of monkeys—monkeys in Benares are fierce—chased him, and he was running. From a distance, an old *sādhu* (monk) shouted at him, 'Bābāji, don't run away. Face the brutes, face the brutes.' Swamiji thought, 'This is a wonderful teaching'. Immediately he turned back and turned towards these monkeys with a fierce look. And the monkeys fled away. He referred to this story in his London lecture and said, 'face the brute', 'face the brute'; otherwise, you run away, and the brute will be chasing you all through your life. That is not manliness. Man has much better capacity hidden within him or her. So, this Śrī Kṛṣṇa's tonic to Arjuna, is a tonic we all need. The whole nation and the world itself will need it.

So, in the third *śloka* of this second chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said: *Klaibyam mā sma gamaḥ pārtha,* 'Don't give in to *klaibyam,* actually it means a person of neuter gender, what you call a *napumsaka liṅga,* neither man nor woman, that is called *klaibya;* it suggests weakness, chicken-heartedness—all these meanings attach to this word *klaibya. Naitattvayyupapadyate,* 'it doesn't befit you'. You have such a noble nature, heroism, courage, everything you have. *Kṣudram hṛdayadaurbalyam tyaktvā uttiṣṭha parantapa.* He was sitting down, broken, sunk in the chariot. In that condition, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *uttiṣṭa,* 'stand up'. The first sign that strength has come to you is when you stand up. When you are still lying down, that old weakness is there. So, 'stand up', 'stand up'; it is a powerful word in dealing with the awakening of a human being. Stand on your feet and be men. So, this *klaibyam,* give it up. *Kṣudram hṛdayadaurbalyam,* 'this weakness of the heart', which is *kṣudram,* i.e., mean, give it up. Arjuna, stand up, face up to your problems. This is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells to Arjuna and to all of us when we are in difficulties and we do not know our inner strength; we think we cannot proceed any more, or we break down. Then,

somebody has to come and give us new strength. That strength is there. But somebody must give the touch; then only will it manifest. We all need it. In fact, in your life you can see, if one is weak, you go and strengthen him or her by a few words. Then he or she really feels stronger. Even appreciating a person increases his or her strength. It is said in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, when people were sent to search for Sītā here and there, Hanumān was asked, 'Go south. You will succeed.' Hanumān took up the job. Then Aṅgada or somebody else praised Hanumān, 'You are such a great soul. You have such great achievements in your life.' All that made Hanumān feel greater and greater confidence in himself in finding Sītā, and he succeeded.

In social relations, you can do two things to each other: either destroy one's confidence, or increase that self-confidence. Mostly we have done the negative thing in India. We have destroyed each other's self-confidence. Speak of his or her great achievements; that will immediately make him or her feel, 'I can. Yes, I can.' This is how Śrī Kṛṣṇa is dealing with Arjuna, 'Stand up. Face up to your problems. Don't become weak. Any type of weakness has no virtue about it. One great lesson Vedanta tells us: Weakness and virtue can never go together. Virtue is strength; weakness is no virtue at all. Where there is no courage, there is no virtue; *virāḥ* is a great word in Sanskrit meaning heroic persons. In that person only you find virtue. In weak people, where is virtue? So, the concept of *dharma* and virtue, even goodness, all these must be associated with strength and fearlessness. Then only they become positive. We somehow did not do so; we often call a good-for-nothing person as good, because he or she doesn't harm anybody. He or she has not the power to harm anybody; where is goodness in it? Where is virtue in it? So, this is how our judgement had been wrong for centuries. That is why I sometimes tell of parents coming to the Ashrama and saying, if there is a good-for-nothing boy in one's house, 'Swamiji, here is a boy, take him as a sannyasin in your Ashrama. He will be very good for you.' It means that what is not good for the world is good for spiritual life. The truth is just the opposite. So, our whole thinking has been defective in this matter. That heroic attitude was not there. Strength and fearlessness were not there. And today Vivekananda comes and preaches only this one great message: strength and fearlessness, *śakti* and *abhīḥ*.

Jawaharlal Nehru writes about this message of Swamiji in his *Discovery of India:* 'He gave a spirit of courage to our people.' A strength, a spirit of manliness, is the biggest contribution from any great teacher. And so, we need this kind of teaching in a big way. In olden days, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave it. He was the very embodiment of strength and fearlessness; and the whole of Vedanta is a message of strength and fearlessness. Never will you find any stress on weakness in Vedanta. Always *abhīḥ, abhīḥ, abhīḥ*. *Abhīḥ* means fearless; be fearless, be fearless. Brahman, the ultimate source of the universe and human beings, is *abhayam*. What is the name of God?, fearlessness. And when you attain God, you become fearless. So, *abhayam vai prāpto'si janakaḥ—Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* says that Sage Yājñavalkya tells King Janaka: 'Janaka, you have achieved the state of fearlessness.' That is your fullest spiritual development. Through fearlessness, you develop spiritually; and never through weakness. Animals are all weak; they are creatures. A human being can become fearless by realizing one's own inherent divine nature. Vivekananda says that every page of the Upaniṣads preach only one message: fearlessness and strength. Are you strong? The human heart asks this question: are there no human weaknesses? Vedanta says, yes, there are. But can you remove weakness through weakness? Weakness can be removed only through strength. Dirt cannot wash dirt. Only pure water can wash dirt. So, another weakness cannot remove existing weakness. Strength alone is the remedy for the world's disease. That is the message of Vedanta. The more spiritual you become, the more fearless and strong you become, and the more compassionate also. You combine two great virtues: fearlessness and compassion. In all Indian literature, you find this confluence of two difficult virtues, difficult to co-exist: intense fearlessness, intense compassion. You can be fearful, so that others are frightened. Or, you can be so weak, anybody can frighten you. These extremes we have seen. But this rare combination is highlighted in the whole of our literature. And in this very *Gītā*, when you come to its twelfth chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will tell 'he or she is my true devotee'—the one who is strong and fearless, and yet is compassionate to all beings. He doesn't fear anybody; but nobody need fear him also, because he is so gentle. *Yasmāt na udvijate lokaḥ lokāt na udvijate ca yaḥ* (12. 15), that is the sign of spiritual growth and spiritual realization. So that the whole subject of every human being is growth,

development and fulfilment. This is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is handling in *Gītā's* eighteen chapters. As I told the Australian, American and other friends, war is only in the first chapter. Afterwards you don't hear about the word 'war' at all. It is only the big problem of total human development that Śrī Kṛṣṇa handles throughout. And, therefore, this is not a book on war. This is a book of human development and fulfilment. No one will say that the second World War and the complete defeat of Hitler and his political and racialist ideology was wrong. That is the philosophy that will help a human being to develop high character which contains these two elements—strength and gentleness—in a confluence. The *Gītā*also conveys the message of combining great broad-mindedness and intensity of faith and conviction—these two cannot often coexist. I am a cosmopolitan, people say. When you examine, you will find that he has no particular conviction. He is all things to all men, because he is nobody himself. That kind of cheap cosmopolitan attitude, some people adopt, because there is no depth; the width is there, but not depth. There are people full of depth, but they are fanatical. They hold to their own, criticize everybody else. That kind of depth, you have seen. But Swamiji says Vedanta wants you to have depth plus breadth: broad attitude and deep conviction. If you can combine these two, then you have the best of character. We shall be 'deep as the ocean, and broad as the sky'; these are the words he has used. Vedanta wants to instil that kind of a character in all people all over the world. So, here you have a profound philosophy of human growth, development, and fulfilment. That cannot come to you when you are in a depressed state of mind, when you are nervous and mentally broken. Until you become somewhat normal, this message cannot come to you.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving the first initial tonic to Arjuna's broken mind through these two verses. And the tonic had the effect. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke these words, Arjuna became somewhat strengthened, somewhat composed in mind. He could speak a little more coherently thereafter. That is what you will see hereafter in the coming verses. In Arjuna's words a little coherence begins to appear and that depression is no more there. Śrī Kṛṣṇa removed it by these powerful words. And with a little more calmness, a little more of rationality, he is putting forth his arguments in his reply to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's exhortations.

That is the subject of verses 4 to 9 in this second chapter. This is what the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* said in a few powerful words (I. iii. 14), *uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata*, 'arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached', as freely translated by Swami Vivekananda. What a beautiful concept! Our human life marching onwards. Flowing water is clean and pure; a stagnant pool is a source of trouble. So also, is a stagnant life, stagnant mind. Arjuna can now control his feelings and emotions. That is the beginning of human development. No animal can control feelings. Whenever feelings come, they express automatically their feelings in action. But man can control feelings, then try to understand the environment, then adapt oneself to that situation. So, controlling feelings is the first step in thinking, followed by effective action. Whenever you have strong feelings, you find that the mind is clouded. When your feelings are slightly calmed, then clear thinking begins. This is the dictate of neurology: animals cannot control their feelings. The first step to get control of the environment, is controlling our feelings. You see something, you jump at it, or run away from it. But, human being alone can control his or her feelings, watch, study, think, roll in one's mind the consequences of things, and express oneself in action. That is how man controls the environment, which no animal can do. Even the chimpanzee cannot have a fraction of that capacity which you see in a human being, says neurologist Gray Walter in his book: *The Living Brain*.

And therefore, Arjuna is now in a more equable frame of mind. Later on, in the middle of the second chapter, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa begins expounding his own philosophy of life, he will say, this equable mind, this balanced mind, is essential. The word is *samatva.* Keep these emotions and feelings inside, just calm them down a little. Then you can see things clearly; otherwise, it will be like life in Delhi when there is a dust storm. They call it *āndhi*; you can't see anything. The whole sky is full of dust. Similarly, emotions and feelings without any control, become like *āndhi* for the mind. When they settle down, you can see things clearly. So, in the burst of emotion, in the burst of feeling, don't do anything; don't say anything. Whatever you do at that time will not be correct. Feeling should be controlled by thinking. All aspects of the subject should be studied before you enter into the stage of action. As Swami Brahmananda, a disciple of Sri

Ramakrishna, used to tell people: when you write a strong letter to somebody in reply to his or her letter, put your letter under the pillow for a day or two. Afterwards you send it. You yourself will modify it. That time you were in a flame, and that flame is slowly dying out. If you had posted the letter in the beginning itself, you yourself will feel, why did I do like that? It has spoiled the whole situation. So, human beings have that capacity. If you don't exercise it, you are behaving like an animal. We call a human being a *thinking* animal. But when thinking is removed, the animal only remains. Therefore, Arjuna is now in a more chastened mood. The tonic has acted. So, he is telling Śrī Kṛṣṇa now in a calm, collected mood, and more coherently.

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca—

'Arjuna said:'

कथं भीष्ममहं संख्ये द्रोणं च मधुसूदन।
इषुभिः प्रतियोत्स्यामि पूजार्हावरिसूदन॥४॥

Katham bhīṣmamaham samkhye droṇam ca madhusūdana;
Iṣubhiḥ pratiyotsyāmi pūjārhau arisūdana — 2. 4

'Kṛṣṇa, how can I, in battle, shoot arrows at men like Bhīṣma and Droṇa? They are worthy to be worshipped by me.'

More coherent language you will find here. *Samkhye* means 'in war'. In a war, how can I, *iṣubhiḥ pratiyotsyāmi,* 'fight with my sharp arrows' men like Bhīṣma and Droṇa? They are *Pūjārhau,* means, people who deserve worship. They are our elders. Droṇa is a teacher. Bhīṣma is like a great-grandfather. So, that is the first question Arjuna is asking Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Secondly:

गुरूनहत्वा हि महानुभावान्
श्रेयो भोक्तुं भैक्ष्यमपीह लोके।
हत्वार्थकामांस्तु गुरूनिहैव
भुञ्जीय भोगान् रुधिरप्रदिग्धान्॥५॥

Gurūnahatvā hi mahānubhāvān
śreyo bhoktum bhaikṣyamapīha loke;
Hatvārthakāmāmstu gurūnihaiva
bhuñjīya bhogān rudhirapradigdhān — 2. 5

'Indeed, it were better for me to live on alms in the world and avoid slaying my honoured elders; killing these people who seek their own purposes, I should be tasting blood-stained pleasures.'

Gurūnahatva, 'without killing these gurus'; guru does not mean here the teacher; it means respected elders. *Hi mahānubhāvān*, 'also honoured people'. *Śreyo bhoktum bhaikṣyamapīha loke*, 'I would much prefer to take *bhikṣa*, begging food from several houses'. *Hatvā arthakāmān tu gurūnihaiva, bhuñjīya bhogān rudhirapradigdhān*. 'If I kill these people who run after material wealth, whatever food I eat will be smeared with their blood'. *Artha-kāma* means, *kāma,* desire, for *artha*, wealth. Why are they called *arthakāmas*?

That refers to an incident in the *Mahābhārata* in the beginning itself. Actually, that idea comes now, through the mouth of Yudhiṣṭhira. Just before the battle began, Yudhiṣṭhira, the eldest of the Pāṇḍavas, was not in a mood to fight his opponents; he walked towards the opposite side unarmed —and warriors on both sides were wondering what he was meaning to do— and touched the feet of Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Śalya—three very senior people whom he respected, and requested them to come to his side or remain neutral. And Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Śalya, all the three, replied to Yudhiṣṭhira in the same language, that we are fighting against you. Why?, because we are beholden to the Kauravas, to Duryodhana. He is giving us salary, he is giving us our food, we are bound down by these obligations. So, we are not in a position to help you. We have to fight against you. That is the statement given by all the three to Yudhiṣṭhira at that time (*Mahābhārata, Bhīṣma Parva*, 35):

Arthasya dāso puruṣo
dāsastvartho na kasyacit;
Iti satyam mahārāja
baddho'styarthena kauravaiḥ —

This is related to the early period, when Bhīṣma was the guest of Kauravas; Droṇa was also the same, he was given salary, a free house, and allowances, everything by the Kauravas. What you speak of today: an officer being appointed with all the perquisites. Droṇa also got it; Śalya also got it. All of them thus became bound to the Kauravas. The *Bhīṣma Parva* contains the *Gītā* also. This verse says, 'man is the servant of wealth, wealth is never the servant of anybody'. See the language. *Iti satyam mahārāja baddho'styarthena kauravaiḥ*, 'We have been bound down through wealth by the Kauravas; they give us our salary, our allowances, etc.' What a truth it is even today! We are bound down by the salary we get; the people whom we serve, we have our loyalty towards them; we can't do anything else. Why is it so? Because we want our sensory satisfaction, food, drink, house, all these things. And they all involve money. And so, since we need all these, we need money; most people are subject to the pressure of money. Arjuna is referring to that particular situation. They are *arthakāmas,* by killing them, what do I get? I get food smeared with their blood, which I don't like to eat. I prefer to eat *bhikṣa* taken from some houses. That is far better, says Arjuna. Then,

न चैतद्विद्मः कतरन्नो गरीयो
यद्वा जयेम यदि वा नो जयेयुः
यानेव हत्वा न जिजीविषाम-
स्तेऽवस्थिताः प्रमुखे धार्तराष्ट्राः॥६॥

Na caitadvidmaḥ kataranno garīyo
yadvā jayema yadi vā no jayeyuḥ;
Yāneva hatvā na jijīviṣāmaḥ
te'vasthitāḥ pramukhe dhārtarāṣṭrāḥ — 2. 6

In front of us are the Kauravas, the children of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, all of them ready for battle. We do not understand what is really beneficial to us in this situation. *Na caitadvidmaḥ kataranno garīyo*, 'what is supremely significant and beneficial to us, I am not able to understand'. What is that? *Yadvā jayema, yadi vā no jayeyuḥ*, 'shall we conquer or shall we allow ourselves to be conquered;—between these two questions I am unable to decide. I don't know what is good for us. *Yāneva hatvā na jijīviṣāmaḥ*, 'by

killing whom we have no desire to live'; *te'vasthitāḥ pramukhe dhārtarāṣṭrāḥ,* 'those Kauravas, children of the blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra, are in front of us, by killing all of whom life will have no meaning at all. That is how he is putting his problem more cogently before Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Then *the next śloka brings what you call the precise beginnings of the Gītāteaching*. Arjuna is telling, 'I am confused, I take recourse to Your superior wisdom. My wisdom fails here. I am Your student, Your disciple. Please teach me what is really good for me.' It is only when a student says this will a teacher begin to teach. Unsought advice is not allowed in Vedanta. Unless you seek something, what is given to you has no value. Therefore, here all the commentators will say, the *Gītā* really begins from verse 7 of chapter 2, this particular verse where Arjuna says, 'I seek wisdom from You. What is really good for me, I am not able to understand myself. Please instruct me'.

न हि प्रपश्यामि ममापनुद्याद्
यच्छोकमुच्छोषणमिन्द्रियाणाम्।
अवाप्य भूमावसपत्नमृद्धं
राज्यं सुराणामपि चाधिपत्यम्॥८॥

Kārpaṇyadoṣopahatasvabhāvaḥ
pṛcchāmi tvām dharmasammūḍhacetāḥ;
Yacchreyaḥ syāt niścitam brūhi tanme
śiṣyaste'ham śādhi mām tvām prapannam —2. 7

'My inborn nature has been overwhelmed by the bane of faint-heartedness and I am confused as regards my *dharma* or duty; so I am asking you: tell me definitely what will prove beneficial to me. I am your disciple; teach me, who has surrendered to you'.

Kārpaṇyadoṣopahatasvabhāvaḥ, 'My inborn nature has been overwhelmed by the bane of faintheartedness'; *dharmasammūḍhacetāḥ*, 'I am confused as regards my *dharma* or duty'; *pṛcchāmi tvām*, 'I am asking you'; *Yacchreyaḥ syāt niścitam brūhi tanme,* 'tell me definitely what will prove beneficial'; *śiṣyaste'ham*, 'I am your disciple'; *śādhi mām tvām prapannam*, 'teach me who has surrendered to you'.

In this verse Arjuna is explaining his position more soberly than what we heard towards the end of the first chapter. There he was completely broken down, he had lost his balance of mind. So grief-stricken he had become. After the tonic administered by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in verses 2 and 3 of this chapter as I said before, Arjuna became somewhat calm. He could explain his difficulties more cogently. We all pass through this kind of situation in our own lives. Arjuna is not unique, except in one sense. All of us have no battle to wage, or fight a war. Arjuna had to fight a war; but all of us have the battle of life, facing problems, overcoming them, trying to achieve life-fulfilment. That challenge is there before all of us. So, we are not going to become Arjunas, going to fight with everybody. That is not the meaning of the *Gītā*. One particular situation: something in it has a universal value. Take out that universal value from that situation. That is why, after the first half of the second chapter, you don't hear of war at all. It is all about character, purity, love, compassion. The whole teaching, when you come to the twelfth chapter, gets reflected in the question, 'who is My true devotee?' Śrī Kṛṣṇa will tell, 'he is My true devotee, who is strong and fearless, and makes others also strong and fearless. He doesn't use his strength to destroy other people': *Yasmānnodvijate loko lokānnodvijate ca yaḥ,* 'he who does not frighten the world, and he who is not frightened *by* the world' (*Gītā*, 12. 15), that is high character. A timid person doesn't frighten the world. But he is timid, there is no virtue in it. But a very strong person can frighten the world. That is also not a high virtue. But have strength and fearlessness and inspire the same thing in others as well—that is ideal humanity. *That is the main teaching, not only in this book but all through our Sanātana Dharma literature*. In the Upaniṣads, the *Gītā*, the *Mahābhārata*, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* everywhere you will find that word which has been coined in Sanskrit, typifying the *Sanātana Dharma* mind of the best human being. That word is *ajāta śatru*, one whose enemy is not yet born. You have an enemy, you love him, you forgive him, that is one thing. You have no enemy at all, you don't recognize any enemy, that is the highest state of mind. That term is a very meaningful term: *ajāta śatru,* whose *śatru*, 'enemy', is *ajāta,* 'not yet born'—considered to be the highest level of human development. Probably only a handful of persons can achieve that highest state. But it is the highest state. To reach that highest state, we have to proceed in that direction, by becoming less and less aggressive, more and

more loving and peaceful, and the whole thing will be a natural development of any human being from what he or she *is* under all conditions, to what he or she *can be* in that high level. It is this journey of man from ordinary conditions to the highest level that is being expounded in this *Gītā*as a philosophy of human development. In the course of that you will have occasion, sometimes to resist evil by fight, by war, as things are in the world. If you don't do so, you will not be able to achieve your own development or the development of society as a whole. Evil will multiply, if you don't resist the evil that is there. That message meant for a mendicant or a *sādhu* is different from the message meant for a householder. The latter has a family, he or she has to look after one's people, keep them, protect them. If somebody comes and steals from the house, he or she cannot honour the thief and say, 'take this also'. He or she will have to starve one's own children thereby. But some great *sādhus* have done it, like Pavahāri Bābā of Ghazipur, of whom we read in Vivekananda's life. When a thief stole away some things, he ran behind the thief saying, 'you have forgotten some things. I am giving this, take this also.' This he said. That is a beautiful idea. And the thief inspired by the touch of Pavahāri Bāba, later renounced the world, became a sādhu, and Vivekananda met him in Rishikesh and heard the story of his transformation by the touch of Pavahāri Bābā. But, an average citizen cannot do it. What he or she has lost, is lost, and will suffer from that loss. He or she cannot afford to lose it. One must learn to protect what one has by peaceful means and, if necessary, by violent means as well.

Now the greatest user of non-violence in the world was Mahatma Gandhi. And in his life you find a wonderful example: Some policemen went and attacked a village in U.P. Probably, Ballia may be one of those villages. And they did a lot of havoc during the *satyāgraha* days. They mishandled the women of the village. No one even protested. When Gandhiji sent an investigation team, this is the reply they gave: 'Gandhiji taught us non-violence. So, we kept quiet. We didn't resist.' Gandhiji said, 'I was ashamed to hear that statement. You couldn't protect the honour of your women! In the name of non-violence, you behaved like a coward! Is that non-violence? I preach a non-violence of the courageous person, not of a coward.' There are situations in life, therefore, where you will have to

resist evil, if you want to survive. That is why, in the whole of the Hindu *Sanātana Dharma* tradition, there is no place for *pacifism,* as we call it in modern times: under any circumstance, I shall not resist. That pacifism has no place in our thinking. It is meant for a handful of persons who can stand it. To all others, there are occasions when you have to resist either peacefully or using some force—there is no aggression in it, it is a sheer need of human life.

When I was in the United States during my lecture tour, I heard the young American people there strongly protesting against the Vietnam War: 'It was a wicked war. America has no business there.' Thus, they protested, and they made America withdraw from Vietnam. That is wonderful! But not a single American protested when America joined the war against Hitler under Nazi ideology. That was a dangerous ideology; it will destroy the human spirit. If it had succeeded in the last war, humanity would have been dwarfed a good deal. So, nobody objected to that kind of a war to destroy that wicked philosophy which was gaining strength.

So, go back to the *Mahābhārata* period. How many evil deeds were done by the Kauravas, including insulting Draupadi in public by taking away her clothes. Many such insults these people suffered due to the constraints of the moral values they had upheld, until they could not suffer any more. Again and again you will find the *Mahābhārata* speaking: Peace is the greatest objective. Every state must choose peace and not war. Unless you are driven to it, avoid war by every means, was the teaching throughout the *Mahābhārata* as well as in the *Gītā*. So, when that critical situation came, when the Pāṇḍavas claimed their right to half the kingdom, after returning from exile in the forest—that was the arrangement originally—and when they were refused even that, then only they took recourse to war, to take what was due to them. You will have to take recourse to war. Even then Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, 'Wait. Let me try once again. I shall go as an ambassador on your behalf to the court of the Kauravas and plead for a peaceful settlement.' And everybody agreed, and the speech he delivered in the Kaurava court is masterly. Today, in the United Nations, you can hear echoes of some of the speeches in the Mahābhārata. You will find ideas there, almost verbatim: human values, the greatness of peace and harmony, peaceful settlement of disputes, all these you will find. And so, what did Śrī

Kṛṣṇa do there? He said, ‘These Pāṇḍavas, to whom the country belongs, you have usurped it by tricky means; doesn’t matter. Give them half the kingdom, and the other half, you keep. They will build a new capital.’ The Kauravas said, ‘no.’ Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa argues coming down and down. ‘Give them five villages.’ ‘No’, ‘give them just one village, and they can have their own place to live and be happy there.’ ‘Nothing doing. Not one *sūci-mukha,* point of a needle, we will give to the Pāṇḍavas.’ It was at this stage, that the situation went beyond human control. If you allow it even then to continue, it will be dangerous, as in the case of Hitler’s war, if he had won. So, there was need to resist that evil, and it became very serious. So much destruction took place. This is a big civil war event in ancient Indian history: the *Mahābhārata* war. Things were not the same after that. But it was beyond control. A similar thing happened when Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s own people killed each other in a tantrum state in Western India’s city of Dvāraka.

Humanity has this weakness. Sometimes they can be excellent people, very peaceful; sometimes they become aggressive, wicked, violent. That is humanity. The teaching in the *Gītā* is to make humanity curb that aggressive spirit, to make people more peaceful, to live in peace with each other. That is why, throughout the book, you hear Śrī Kṛṣṇa expounding a philosophy of life based upon one particular situation centred in Arjuna. When you take a particular event, and universalize it, you get philosophy. A particular event is not philosophy. From that particular, you develop a universal concept. That is called the philosophy of life. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will tell to everyone, Arjuna had an actual battle to wage. You have no such battle to wage. But you have the battle of your own life to wage. So many difficulties will come, challenges will come. You like to run away like Arjuna? No; face them. That is the message He conveys to all humanity in India as well as abroad. While doing so, don’t increase the evil that is already there. Do it in such a way that you will make the world a little better.

Sri Ramakrishna, in one of his beautiful parables, refers to this particular subject. A poisonous snake lived in a forest. Children used to play near about, but they were terribly afraid of the snake. One day, a holy man came by that way. He went towards the place where the snake was. And a boy told him, ‘Sir, don’t go that way. There is a poisonous snake.’ He

said, ‘I am not afraid of this.’ He went straight. The snake came towards him in an aggressive manner. But he uttered some mantra and the snake became very quiet in front of him. Then occurred a conversation between the sage and the snake: ‘Why do you harm people? It is not proper to harm people. Live a non-violent life. Live for yourself. Allow others also to live for themselves. Hereafter don’t do any harm to anybody. I give you a mantra. You keep it in mind. You will achieve something great in this very life. I will come back again.’ Saying this, he went away. From that day, the snake changed its ways. It became quiet, peaceful, non-aggressive, and the children also, watching from a distance, found the snake had become less aggressive. They went closer and closer. The snake was not reacting. They did not know how all these changes had taken place, but at least they could see that the snake was not dangerous, they can play with it. So, the time came, when the boys could come near the snake; they took the snake by its tail, whirled it round and round, and dashed it on the ground. Half dead, it remained. At nightfall, it felt a little better and went into its own hole. It was slowly reduced to bone and skin. After a few days, the holy man returned. And the boys said, ‘That snake is gone. No need of going there.’ He said, ‘That cannot be. I have given him instruction. Without realizing life’s purpose, he cannot die.’ So, he quietly went to the hole; he had given it a name; he called it by that name. After some time, the snake crawled out of its hole and saluted the teacher. And his teacher asked him, ‘What has happened to you? You have become skin and bone.’ He said, ‘Probably, it is because you had asked me not to harm anybody; I have stopped eating any insects, any kind of living things, I live on dry leaves, may be that.’ Because of the *sāttvika* mind, he had forgotten that the boys had done harm to him. He could not even remember those events. So much goodness had come to him. When he said this, the teacher said, ‘What a fool you are! Remember, something must have happened. This could not have happened by merely taking dry leaves.’ Then the snake said, ‘Yes, I remember. One day, the boys who were playing here, finding me peaceful, they came closer and closer. They became very bold, they took me by the tail, whirled me and dashed me against the ground. I vomited blood and I somehow went into my hole. That may be the reason for this condition. You have taught me not to harm, so I did not harm anyone. So, I have come to this condition and I don’t mind it.’ And the teacher said, ‘What a fool you are! I certainly told

you not to harm anybody, not to bite anybody. But you could have hissed at them. Then they would have gone away. Learn to hiss; otherwise, they will destroy you. You cannot live in the midst of the world with this kind of attitude. Certainly don't put poison into others. But don't be made an object of pity by others and destroy your own life.' Saying this Sri Ramakrishna told the audience, 'Hiss, but don't bite.'

You have this capacity to stand on your own feet, but don't increase the evil in the world by your non-resistance to the evil in the world. That is the method we have to evolve. That is what the *Gītā* teaches throughout. Never increase the evil, reduce it. But it is not on the side of unqualified pacifism, which enveloped the European mind after the first World War. We don't have that pacifism, we want peace, we want humanism, we want love and concern; while living in this imperfect world, you must learn how to protect your interests. All are not going to become mendicants. Protect your own interests. If somebody comes and snatches away your son or daughter, you are not going to keep quiet, or hand over your second child also to the person who has snatched away the first child. You won't do that. If you do so, you won't be human at all. Something has gone wrong with you. That is what the *Gītā* is going to tell you. You must be able to protect your interests, protect other people's interests, the national interest, without endangering the welfare of humanity as a whole. It is a very difficult subject, but it must be pursued as best one can. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will always say (*Gītā*, 2. 40), 'This is a high ideal, but do as much as you can. *Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt.*' It will come in the course of this chapter: 'Even a little of this *Dharma* will save us from great fear'.

And so Śrī Kṛṣṇa had to tell Arjuna in the midst of the battlefield, at the end of a long course of negotiation where evil was not going to surrender to any good thought, there was nothing else to do, and a very critical situation had arisen. When Arjuna said, I don't want to fight, Śrī Kṛṣṇa had to tell him, 'No. That is unmanly. You have to. Your very bones will make you do so. Face the brute. Something has happened to you; you have become weak. You have become distressed, you have become broken down as it were.' That is why the second and third verses of this chapter made this exhortation to Arjuna: *Kutastvā kaśmalam idam viṣame samupasthitam;*

Anāryajuṣṭham asvargyam akīrtikaram arjuna. Klaibyam mā sma gamaḥ pārtha na etat tvayi upapadyate; Kṣudram hṛdayadaurbalyam tyaktvā uttiṣṭha parantapa. This was exactly what Gandhiji said in our time: 'You allowed your women to be dishonoured by the police; you must use even your teeth to protect your honour.' These are the words of Gandhiji, who was a votary of non-violence from every point of view; but he knew that cowardice, and non-violence cannot go together.

That is why, in this great book, the first part of the *Gītā* teaches you how to develop yourself, gain self-confidence, capacity to face difficulties and obstacles, achieve what is called 'manliness', without any gender bias; a wonderful word in English. Towards the end of the *Gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will give you a higher dimension, 'Surrender everything to the Divine'. It is all His. You are only an instrument. That is called complete surrender. This is the *Carama śloka*, 'last verse' towards the end of the book, the last Testament of the *Gītā: Tameva śaraṇam gaccha,* 'surrender everything to the Divine'. Everybody cannot surrender. Unless you are very strong, you cannot surrender. A person who has nothing in his pocket, no bank account, he will say, 'I want to renounce'. What will you renounce? You have no money, no intelligence, nothing. What will you renounce? Have something to renounce. Work hard, earn money, gain the confidence of other people. That is called the first stage of human education. Then comes the final stage which will come in the *Gītā* later on. Have a greater strength to surrender your ego entirely to the Divine. That needs greater strength. As I say very often, to earn money needs strength and hard work, but to donate money needs greater strength. Isn't it? How difficult it is to donate what you have earned!

न हि प्रपश्यामि ममापनुद्याद्
यच्छोकमुच्छोषणमिन्द्रियाणाम्।
अवाप्य भूमावसपत्नमृद्धं
राज्यं सुराणामपि चाधिपत्यम्॥८॥

Na hi prapaśyāmi mamāpanudyāt
Yat śokamucchoṣaṇamindriyāṇām;
Avāpya bhūmau asapatnamṛddham

rājyam surāṇāmapi cādhipatyam—2.8

Arjuna says: 'I do not see any kind of prosperous kingdom on earth or overlordship over the denizens of heaven which will remove the grief that has scorched my senses'.

Na hi prapaśyāmi, 'I do not see'; a*vāpya bhūmau asapatnamṛddham rājyam*, 'that, obtaining an unrivalled prosperous kingdom on earth'; *surāṇām api cādhipatyam*, 'and overlordship over even the denizens of heaven'; *mamāpanudyāt yat śokam ucchoṣaṇam indriyāṇām*, 'will dispel the grief that has scorched my senses'.

Śoka or grief can burn away our sensory system. Some of you may have had this experience. 'I am in such a difficult situation just now'. This is Arjuna's statement; and then Sañjaya says what happened next. That leads to the beginning of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's discourse.

सञ्जय उवाच –

Sañjaya uvāca—

Sañjaya said:

एवमुक्त्वा हृषीकेशं गुडाकेश: परन्तप:।
न योत्स्य इति गोविन्दमुक्त्वा तूष्णीं बभूव ह॥९॥

Evamuktvā hṛṣīkeśam guḍākeśaḥ parantapaḥ;
Na yotsya iti govindamuktvā tūṣṇīm babhūva ha — 2. 9

'Having said this to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna said, I am not going to fight. And he remained quiet in the chariot.'

Now what did Śrī Kṛṣṇa do?

तमुवाच हृषीकेश: प्रहसन्निव भारत।
सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये विषीदन्तमिदं वच:॥१०॥

Tamuvāca hṛṣīkeśaḥ prahasanniva bhārata;
Senayorubhayormadhye viṣīdantamidam vacaḥ — 2. 10

Śrī Kṛṣṇa had a tremendous control over the situation. He was not confused like Arjuna. Wherever there is that tremendous self-control and self-restraint, you will find that the mind is spontaneous and natural. A smile appears; Arjuna could not smile in that condition. That smile on Śrī Kṛṣṇa's face is a sign of the tremendous control He had over the situation around. When you are in a distressed state of mind, you cannot smile. Even if you smile, that would be a contorted smile, not a natural smile. Look at a baby's smile, how beautiful, how natural; we lose that power as we grow older and older. But still we can have some sort of natural, spontaneous smile. But if you are in distress, no smile can come. In the case of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, this smile was a constant feature of His mind. A tremendous mind with great control over the environment around Him. So, He confronts the problems and tensions of the world with a gentle smile, and through that He administers that calmness, that tranquillity, to the human mind. In the *Mahābhārata* epic, you will find many instances of how Śrī Kṛṣṇa faces very difficult situations and brings about calmness around Him. The expression *prahasanniva* means 'as if with a smile'. From here onwards you find Śrī Kṛṣṇa's exposition in the second chapter; from verses 11 to 38, trying His best through various arguments to prod Arjuna to face the battle. Arjuna is a *kṣatriya.* His very nature is such that he has to face this difficult situation. Everybody depends upon him for the winning of the battle. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa wants Arjuna to recognize his duty at this time through various arguments, some of them highly metaphysical, some of them very worldly. And the metaphysical arguments are based upon the philosophy of ascetic thought, *jñāna-mārga,* which denies this world, which believes in a transcendental experience, where the Atman is ever free, without any attachment. That is everyone's true nature. Birthless, deathless is the Self of all. Based on that metaphysics and vision, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is inducing Arjuna to face up to this battle. But those arguments do not convince Arjuna. Śrī Kṛṣṇa had to give his own philosophy thereafter, under which we all can fight the battle of life and face up to its challenges.

All these are possible under that philosophy of *practical Vedanta* which Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to expound from 39th verse onwards for all people. *That is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's original contribution to the philosophy of human life and development*. The first one will not allow you to work, face up to the

problems, etc. The first one can as well encourage Arjuna to run away from battle. Let me become a mendicant; that also can be the conclusion based on that philosophy. It is valid but only for a few. Śrī Kṛṣṇa calls it *Sāṅkhya* here. *Sāṅkhya* does not refer to the metaphysical school of that name, but to the *jñāna-mārga*, the path of *neti, neti,* not this, not this. This world is unreal. The Atman is supreme, deathless. Realize that; why get into all this mess here? That can be the conclusion from that philosophy. On the basis of that philosophy, you can't work, you can't face up to problems, you can't fight a war. So, that doesn't impress Arjuna with the need for war. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa finds the need for a new philosophy of practical Vedanta, which he develops himself, *based upon a man or woman at work*, seeking also spiritual realization while continuing to work. For millions of people, that is the basis of a life of action, a life of endeavour, a positive attitude to life; all that will come from verse 39 onwards. Sañjaya now says:

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

After all this discussion with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, when Arjuna said, 'I am not going to fight', and sat in the chariot, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has to say what will inspire this warrior to face up to the problems that are there; 'it was a very critical situation', *viṣame samupasthitam.* That is the situation, which Śrī Kṛṣṇa is facing now with respect to His own friend and disciple, Arjuna. Śrī Kṛṣṇa said:

अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे।
गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिता:॥११॥

Gatāsūn agatāsūmśca nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ — 2. 11

The verse says that, based upon the philosophy which Arjuna had invoked in his mind, Bhīṣma and Droṇa were not to be mourned for. They are great people, what is the virtue in showing pity for them? *Aśocyān,* they are 'not to be grieved over'. They are great people themselves. *Anvaśocastvam,* 'you are feeling so much of grief'. *Prajñāvādāmśca bhāṣase,* 'and yet you are speaking wise words'. *Gatāsūn agatāsūmśca nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ*, under that philosophy, '*paṇḍitāḥ,* wise persons, will

not grieve for the dead or the living.' So, *paṇḍita* is a great word in Sanskrit, though today it means very ordinary in North India. The Sanskrit word *paṇḍita* comes from the word *paṇḍā.* What is *paṇḍā? ātmaviṣayā-buddhi* is called *paṇḍā,* 'the *buddhi* which is turned towards the Atman', the Infinite Divine within; that is called *paṇḍā,* and those who have this *paṇḍā* are *paṇḍitaḥ.* That is the original meaning. But, today it means also a cook. In Delhi, in many houses the cook is called the *paṇḍit.* But in the *Gītā* another definition comes, *paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ* (5.18): 'those who have an even-minded attitude towards things, they are called *paṇḍitāḥ'.*

न त्वेवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः।
न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वे वयमतः परम्॥१२॥

Na tvevāham jātu nāsam na tvam neme janādhipāḥ;
Na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ sarve vayamataḥ param —2. 12

So far as man is concerned, there is an eternal element in everyone of us. Our philosophy tells: bodies come and go, the soul remains. That is why we say at death, we threw the body away. *Śarīr choḍ diyā.* I am the Atman, I am the soul, I have a body, I threw it away. That is our normal understanding. So, these people who are here, yourself, myself, we are always there. There is no time when we were not. There is no time when we shall not be. We are the immortal Atman. That is the truth about man as taught by India's *Sanātana Dharma:* The human beings are essentially divine; we have a body, subject to change, subject to death; but, our Self is essentially divine and deathless. We are all *amṛtasya putrāḥ,* as the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* proclaims (2. 5). *Na tvevāham jātu nāsam na tvam neme janādhipāḥ,* 'neither myself, nor yourself, nor these kings have been not; and never shall we all cease to be'. *Na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ sarve vayam ataḥ param,* 'we are always there even after the death of the body'. This subject comes through several verses in this section. An example is given; this is a famous verse in the *Gītā*.

देहिनोऽस्मिन् यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा।
तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति॥१३॥

Dehino'smin yathā dehe kaumāram yauvanam jarā;

Tathā dehāntaraprāptiḥ dhīrastatra na muhyati — 2. 13

Every embodied human being passes through different states: *kaumāram,*—a child below twelve years is called a boy, *kumāra,* or, a girl, *kumārī. Kaumāram* means child stage. Then *yauvanam,* youthfulness; then, *jarā,* old age. 'Every embodied person passes through the states of childhood, youth, and old age in the body; similarly also death and rebirth; a courageous person is not deluded thereby.' We continue this human evolution through new bodies, believing in the idea of rebirth—a very important teaching in *Sanātana Dharma.* The human being passes through birth after birth until he or she realizes the truth of the immortal Self within. This process goes on until one burns away one's *karmas,* our fruits of actions, in the fire of spiritual knowledge. So, we are asked to accelerate our spiritual development with the help of this body; realize the truth, then the body's work is over. Until then, the body will remain in one form or other; for, a human body is meant not for pleasure and comfort only; for that, animal bodies are better fitted. This human body is meant for knowledge, both secular and spiritual. Realize the highest truth, burn away all your *karmas;* then you have no birth, you have no death, you are free. So says the verse. A subtle soul is within us; Vedanta calls it a subtle body, *sūkṣma śarīra.* When our sages, through scientific enquiry into the depth dimension of human nature beyond the sensory level, discovered the *sūkṣma śarīra* in human beings, behind this *sthūla śarīra*—that is, a subtle body behind a gross body, they understood that death is only the death of the *sthūla śarīra; sūkṣma śarīra* doesn't die. That is always there. The *sūkṣma śarīra* manufactures another gross body for itself to continue its search for his or her true Self, forgetting what happened in the previous life. That is why rebirth is one of the great ideas that was developed in India, *tathā dehāntaraprāptiḥ;* therefore, *dhīrastatra na muhyati,* 'there the wise one, the heroic one, will not be deluded', by this kind of changes taking place in human evolution. Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives another beautiful idea now, and that is meant for all of us.

मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः।
आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत॥१४॥

Mātrāsparśāstu kaunteya śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkhadāḥ;
āgamāpāyino'nityāḥ tāmstitikṣasva bhārata — 2. 14

The first phrase is, '*mātrāsparśāḥ*'; *sparśa* means touch; *mātrā* means sensory objects. When we touch the sensory object, then our sensory system comes in touch with the sensory object. The word *mātrā* is associated with the word measure, *mā* means to measure, this is a wonderful word. That day our nuclear scientist Raja Ramanna spoke on the subject of mind and matter, nature and mind. There he used the word *mā,* measure. And this concerns the science of measurement; here mathematics comes in. All material or physical sciences are subject to measurement. But when you go beyond the physical dimensions of nature in the human being, no measurement is possible. Up to the sensory level, we can have measurement. So, the word *mātrā* comes from this idea of measurement; this sensory system measures that object that is there. That is how we come in touch with the world. *Mātrāsparśāstu kaunteya,* 'contact with sense objects, O Arjuna'; what happens to you thereby? Sometimes 'it will give you sensation of cold, sometimes of heat; sometimes of pleasure, sometimes of pain'. That is the nature of such contact: *śīta-uṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-dāḥ.* But, they are, *āgama-apāyino,* 'they come and they go'; they 'don't persist', *anityāḥ*. If that is so, how shall we react to them properly? *Tān titikṣasva bhārata,* 'bear with them, O Arjuna'.

That is a wonderful statement. 'What cannot be cured must be endured', we say in English. You fall ill, you go to the doctor. Doctor will treat you; there is a science about it, but, so far as *you* are concerned, co-operate with the doctor by that tremendous determination to bear with it so long as it is there. So, *tān titikṣasva,* 'bear with them'; it develops strength of mind. Try to remove them as far as you can by treatment; what you cannot cure, bear with them. The capacity to bear with these things is a tremendous capacity. We can see that the capacity to bear pain and other experiences is very relative to human beings. Somebody has more of it, somebody has less of it.

The threshold of pain, as we call it in neural language, is different in different people. Some people can stand a good deal of it; some people cannot stand even a little bit of it. When I was in charge of a hostel for students in Mysore, we had to give the Malaria injection to our students;

young boys of ages 10, 11, 12; some of them came, took the injection, and went away; one or two students, as soon as they saw the needle, became unconscious and fell down! Their threshold of pain was very low. So, we have to develop that strength: say, 'I can stand it, I can stand it'. The capacity to withstand the nonsense of life is an important capacity. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, *tān titikṣasva bhārata,* 'bear with them'. If you don't bear, you fall down, get destroyed. If you had developed a little more strength, you could have stood it well. So, don't be so weak. Everyone must develop a little strength of mind to withstand the changes and chances of life. Life is not all fun, all pleasure; often, difficulties come. So, this kind of strengthening of the human organism against the environment is very important for human life. If your body is strong, no disease germs can enter into it and multiply there. If it is weak, any number of germs can enter and create trouble. So, keep the organism strong. Your mind also must be strong.

In fact, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will repeat this idea throughout this book. Strength of mind and control of the sensory system are very important for any decent human being. Virtue and morality cannot thrive without this kind of self-discipline. In normal life, difficulties come. If you can bear a little, probably things would be better a little later. When you swim in the ocean, the waves come and buffet you, dash against you. So, when the waves come, duck underneath; and, as it goes away, you come up again. That is the way to deal with the waves. They come and they go. They are not always there. So, you can always have the capacity developed to swim against the waves by this method. So, this concept of *tān titikṣasva* 'bear with them', because they are *anityāḥ,* 'they are not always there'. A little patience can bring about great changes. When we are weak-minded, the first onslaught of an unhappy situation makes us broken down. The very first onslaught. That shows weakness. If a little strength is there, one can say: I shall withstand it, I shall overcome it. That is called tremendous faith in oneself, *ātma-śraddhā.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa wants all of us to develop that *ātma-śraddhā,* I shall overcome. One of the national songs of the American people is: 'We shall overcome, we shall overcome'. That spirit must be there in all people. So, He said, *tān titikṣasva*. *Titikṣā* is a great word in Sanskrit. It is defined by Śaṅkarācārya in the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* in one verse (24). It is one of the

virtues to be developed by a student of Vedanta: *Sahanam sarvaduḥkhānām apratīkārapūrvakam; Cintāvilāparahitam sā titikṣā nigadyate.* 'The bearing of all suffering without anxiety and weeping and without the intention to react is called *titikṣā*.'

The next *śloka* says:

यं हि न व्यथयन्त्येते पुरुषं पुरुषर्षभ।
समदुःखसुखं धीरं सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते॥१५॥

Yam hi na vyathayantyete puruṣam puruṣarṣabha;
Samaduḥkhasukham dhīram so'mṛtatvāya kalpate—2. 15

'He or she, who is not thrown down by any of these experiences (happiness or misery, cold or heat), *samaduḥkhasukham dhīram*, 'the courageous one who is even-minded in *duḥkha,* grief, and *sukha,* happiness', *so'mṛtatvāya kalpate*, 'that person alone can achieve immortality'; he or she can realize the Atman which is immortal. This is a tremendous capacity; even in our political struggle for independence, we have seen that some of the leaders had the capacity to withstand pressures from outside. They didn't break down. They stood it; it is sad that we are losing it; now we have to regain it once again. I remember reading it in the papers, when Sardar Vallabhai Patel was arguing a case in the court, a man delivered a telegram to him. He just read it, put it in his pocket, continued his arguments, and then went home, to see his dead wife. That was the telegram. How many of us can withstand that shock calmly? It is not for want of love; love was there. But something more was there: the capacity to withstand the ups and downs of life. A good deal of courage is needed to go beyond the pulls of the physical system, nervous system, psychic system, and realize the Atman that is behind all this. That strength we have to develop from now onwards. That is why high character-strength is necessary for spiritual development. One has to cultivate that strength which one has, by oneself. No one can purchase it for money. You have regularly to build it up in yourself by yourself; other people can help you, guide you; but the work is your own. This human life, this packet of psycho-physical energy, I must learn to cultivate in the right way so that the best harvest will come out of it. And the highest harvest is realizing one's

own true nature as the immortal Self, the Atman. Sri Ramakrishna used to sing a Bengali song composed by Ramprasad and beginning with 'O mind! You do not know the art of farming': *Re man, tumi kṛṣi kāj jāno nā. Emon mānav jami roilo patit, ābād korile phalto sona, '*such rich field of human life is lying fallow, which, if cultivated, would have given the harvest of gold.'

The next *śloka* is a highly metaphysical one.

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः।
उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः॥१६॥

Nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ;
Ubhayorapi dṛṣṭo'ntaḥ tvanayoḥ tattvadarśibhiḥ — 2. 16

Asat and *sat,* these words are used. They have got different meanings in different contexts. In a purely philosophical context they mean the unreal and the real. But in Sāṅkhya terminology, it has got another meaning: one is called the cause, the other is called the effect. The *Sat* is the effect, the *asat* is the cause, because *sat* you can see. And cause and effect are non-different, according to the Sāṅkhyas. As the cause, so the effect. As much energy you put into your machine, that much of work that machine can do, nothing more. That is called cause and effect being non-different. But in this context, the word *sat* means the real. The word *asat* means the unreal. So, the *śloka* says, *na asato vidyate bhāvo,* 'the unreal never is'; similarly, *nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ,* 'the word "non-existent" cannot be applied to what is real'. The *sat* is the real; it can never be the non-existent. Our thinkers, when they studied the world, found two aspects to the world: one is a changeable aspect, another an unchangeable aspect. Everything in this world is changeable; every second it is changing. Says *Śaṅkarācārya* in his commentary on the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad: Pratikṣaṇam anyathā svabhāvo, '*every moment it is becoming something else'. Change is the characteristic of this external and much of the internal world. And anything that changes, moment to moment, Vedanta calls it unreal. That is how we use the word unreal; it exists, but it is unreal. It appears, but it is unreal.

This is one great conclusion of the philosophers of India, China, as well as Greece, in ancient times. The nature of this manifested universe, a universe which one experiences with the five senses, is that, it is constantly changing, and is therefore unreal. Whatever changes, is unreal. Then where is the reality? Vedanta says, yes, there is the changeless reality beyond the sensory level, you come to the world of reality, which is unchanging, infinite, eternal. This distinction was made very early in our philosophy; in Greek philosophy also there are two schools: one holding on to the eternal, changeless reality, the other holding on to the world of change. That world of change is expressed beautifully by the Greek philosophers in the saying, 'you do not step into the same river twice'. The world is like that, constantly changing. This becomes more and more confirmed when you study modern physics dealing with matter, and modern biology dealing with living systems. For example, your body changes within a few years; everything in the body has changed. Yet, you say, 'I am'. I feel I am the same person. Some sort of unity, somewhere, is there in this world of change. Man alone can discover it. Animals change, but they do not find that unity behind the change. But man feels there is a unity where all this change is really centred. Just like all the changes of pictures in a film, making for the unity of the film. That is due to the curtain behind the film. That makes for unity. Similarly, we search for the unity behind the multiplicity in the universe. The first truth is change, and we see that whatever changes is unreal.

We have, therefore, a fine definition of what is real, given in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Kārikā* by Gauḍapāda (II. 6): *ādau ante ca yannāsti vartamāne'pi tat tathā; Vitataiḥ sadṛśāḥ santo avitathā iva lakṣitāḥ,* 'what is not in the beginning and in the end, is not in the present also; though it seems to be real, it is characterized as unreal.' The *śloka* says that what does not exist in the beginning and in the end, and appears only in the middle, is called unreal. Then what is real? That which exists in the past, present and future, that is called the real. Always it is there. Is there such a real? Yes, says Vedanta, and that search is the search of philosophy everywhere in the world. Even physical science is in search for that one reality behind this changing universe. In Vedanta, we undertook this task with a seriousness and thoroughness which has no comparison anywhere

else in the world. Here the words *sat* and *asat* have been used. *Nāsato vidyate bhāvo, nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ*; if this external world is unreal, then what is the real? The imperishable infinite Atman, of the nature of pure Consciousness, one and non-dual, 'from Whom the whole universe has come, in Whom it rests, and unto Whom it returns at the end of a cosmic cycle'. That will be the theme of another verse immediately after.

So, we use the word *sat* for that infinite imperishable reality; *asat,* for this perishable universe. The belief that this sensory world alone is true, is called materialism, and that materialism is a strong philosophy today. The world had it earlier also. It will always be there till penetrating thinking comes. Some of today's scientists are now trying to remove materialism from modern science. Even in the last century, Thomas Huxley, a very acute thinker and collaborator of Darwin, termed materialism as an intruder into science. Matter is a useful concept. Nobody has seen matter, but it is a useful concept, like *x, y, z* in solving algebraic problems. But, those who forget that this is only a symbol, and think that it is the real thing, they are doing great injustice to human beings. They will destroy the beauty of human life. That was a warning given by Thomas Huxley in the last century. In this century also, Millikan, the astro-physicist, has said: 'to me a philosophy of materialism is the height of un-intelligence'. And many more are realizing this truth in modern times. So, matter is just a symbol. Nobody has seen matter. We are seeing, from the Indian point of view, one infinite reality, which appears as matter in the world outside, and as the Self within us. There is only one reality in this world. And we call it Brahman or Atman, of the nature of pure Consciousness. That is the language that Vedanta uses, which some Western scientists are now appreciating, that matter itself is only a condensation of Consciousness, visible to the sensory system of man. How wonderful an idea! That you can have various levels of matter: gross matter, subtle matter, still more subtle matter; we see that even in the human body. You have got matter in various levels of subtlety, from the hard bone to the transparent eyeball. In a tree, simple sap becomes hard wood, leaves, flowers, and fruits; thus, matter appears in many levels, gross, subtle, more subtle, and we do not know what that matter is.

Vedanta says that it is Consciousness in various levels of manifestation that manifests as objects and subjects. As the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* expresses

this truth (II. ii. 11): *Brahmaivedam viśvamidam variṣṭham,* 'This manifested universe with its subjects and objects is the adorable Brahman'. Now this philosophy was developed ages ago in India, and modern Western science is going in the direction of Brahman of the Upaniṣads. This is a profound datum, says our Professor Capra in his book *Tao of Physics.* He quotes from *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* a very enigmatic passage: *Prāṇo vai brahma,* '*Prāṇa* is Brahman.' *Prāṇa* is energy; here it means psychic and biological energy. But, it also includes all energies. So, all energy is Brahman. *Prāṇo vai brahma.* '*Prāṇa* is verily Brahman'; then why do we mistake it for these dull, dead physical energies in the world? The next line says: *Kam brahma. Kham brahma.* A very enigmatic statement. *Ka* and *Kha* are the first two consonants in Sanskrit. Brahman is *ka;* Brahman is *kha.* Then the student says, 'I cannot understand this *ka* and *kha.* I can understand *Prāṇa* is Brahman. Please explain to me.' And the teacher explains in Sanskrit: *Kha* means the sky or space which has no limit. That means Brahman is infinite, expansive; that is quite alright. Is it then like the dull physical cosmos that you have in physics and cosmology today. No, it is also *kam*: '*kam brahma*'. *Kam* in Sanskrit means happiness, bliss. That means, its true nature is Consciousness. So, that Brahman is infinite, and yet of the nature of pure Consciousness. And the whole manifested universe is that Brahman only. With much approval this physicist quotes this particular sentence in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad: Prāno vai brahma. Kam brahma. Kham brahma.* And so, change is only a pulsation of that changeless infinite reality. Just like water in the ocean whose pulsation is the wave. Wave has no existence apart from the ocean. It just appears and disappears constantly. So also in today's physics, this language is used, that it is only a wave of that infinite reality behind. The whole universe is just in the wave form. It is a wave of that infinite background reality. Now these are all common terminology, concepts coming from modern physics and cosmology, which obtained earlier in Vedanta or the Upaniṣads.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here, *ubhayorapi dṛṣṭo'ntaḥ tvanayoḥ tattvadarśibhiḥ*. This *anta*, 'this conclusion', *nirṇaya*, has been arrived at by whom?, *tattvadarśibhiḥ*, 'by those who have realized the *tattvam*'. *Tattvam* also is a great scientifically precise word in Sanskrit. *Tasya bhāvaḥ tattvam,* 'the nature of a particular thing is called *tattvam*'. Not what it appears to be.

Just like 'the earth is flat', is not *tattvam* but *matam,* opinion. Our senses tell us that the earth is flat. But what is the *tattvam?* It is round, the earth is a globe. That is called *tattvam.* Those who know the *tattvam* of things, by scientific investigation, they have come to this conclusion: that this *sat,* reality, is always, *is.* And what is *asat*, that which doesn't exist, has no reality. Whatever reality the *asat* possesses, comes from the *sat* itself. So, the sages, who have discriminated and investigated this subject, have come to this conclusion. How thought processes repeat, we find happening in modern physics. In the language of Einstein, 'We have in today's physics,' I am quoting his words, 'two realities. One matter, the other the field. Both cannot be true, for the field alone is true. Matter is only a condensation of that field.' Just see the language, the same language, which Vedanta used ages ago, physicists are compelled to use today, because those sages were in search of truth, not of an opinion. This is the *tattva*; not what appears, not what is pleasing; these are called beliefs and dogmas. Have plenty of them, but *tattvam* is different. This is a great word. I wish our people try to understand the meaning of this word and apply it in day-to-day life.

What is the *tattvam* of a thing? Suppose I have an opinion. I can hold on to an opinion; but, it must be based on truth. It must be a true opinion. Then only it gets the status of a *tattvam.* Otherwise, it is called *matam.* The word opinion in English is called *matam* in Sanskrit. *Tad-asmākam matam*, 'It is our opinion,' or, 'it is my religion'. It is not the truth. I have not investigated it. But when you investigate and find it to be true, then that opinion becomes a *true* opinion. It can stand challenge. So, ordinarily, our religions in the world are always a plural. They are *matams.* What pleases *me,* what attracts *me,* what is relevant to *my* needs, that is called *matam.* I choose to be a Vaiṣṇava, a Śaiva, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian, all this constitutes *matam.* That is one aspect of it. The second aspect is: if you scientifically investigate, what is all this *matam?* What is behind this plurality of *matams?* Is there a truth behind all this? That discovery will lead you to the *tattvam* of religion. When the *tattvam* is discovered, there will be no conflict in religions. Scientific truths do not conflict; only dogmas conflict. We know that all these are forms of the same single reality. There will be no conflict thereafter. Harmony and peace alone can come. And respect for each other: your opinion I respect, you also respect

my opinion. You take some food, I respect it. I take some food, you respect that also. Don't say, my food alone is food, your food is poison. That is what we have done in the name of religion, mistaking it to be *tattvam. Tattvam* is quite different. Any food you may take—that is *matam.* But see that you take so many calories, so much of nourishment needed for health; that is *tattvam.*

So, you can see in religion as well as in food the distinction between *matam* and *tattvam.* Only when you investigate, you will come to this truth. In our country today, when more people begin to ask this question, why so many religions? What is the truth about all of them? Every religion says I am true; yes, you are true. But you can't take a copyright of all truth. Others also say they are true. When such questions come, very impartial objective investigation is needed, and that is what our ancient and modern sages did, and raised *matam* to the level of *tattvam.* And *tattvam* is one. *Tattvam* can never be plural. *Matam* can be plural. So, one *tattvam,* and *matams* are but different expressions of that one *tattvam.* That is how our Indian sages discovered that wonderful unity behind the diversity of religions, established harmony and peace, with so little of intolerance in the name of religion on the soil of India which found expression in the *Ìg-Veda,* the oldest book of the human race (I. 164. 46): *Ekam sat, viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti,* 'Truth is one, sages call it by various names'; and, centuries later, in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: Vadanti tat tattvavidaḥ tattvam yat jñānamadvayam, brahmeti, paramātmeti, bhagavāniti, śabdyate.* That *tattvam* idea comes here. It says, *vadanti tat tattvavidaḥ,* 'the Knowers of truth, *tattva,* declare this'. What do they say? *Tattvam yat jñānamadvayam*, 'there is one *tattvam* which is pure, non-dual Consciousness', which we call Brahman in the Upaniṣads, of the nature of pure, non-dual Consciousness. That is the *tattvam.* But 'that *tattvam* is spoken of differently in language and style by different people'. What are these? *Brahmeti Paramātmeti Bhagavāniti śabdyate. Śabda*, or sound or speech, makes that One appear as many. 'Some call It Brahman, some call It the *Paramātmā,* the supreme Self, and some call It *Bhagavān,* the all-loving God.

In this way, this investigation of *matam* versus *tattvam* has done immense good to this country. In no other country it has been attempted even, not even once. It has never been attempted, except as politically

convenient arrangements. And today we have to inaugurate that kind of investigation, to find harmony behind these diverse manifestations. As in the case of philosophy, so in the case of religion. We have to consider *matam* as a plural and *tattvam* as a singular, and the plural must pay homage to the singular.

In the next verse the *Gītā* says:

अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम्।
विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हति॥१७॥

Avināśi tu tadviddhi yena sarvamidam tatam;
Vināśamavyayasyāsya na kaścitkartumarhati — 2. 17

'Consider that which pervades the whole universe as indestructible; nothing can destroy that inexhaustible reality.'

This infinite truth, of the nature of pure, non-dual, Consciousness, pervades the whole universe. Things are created and destroyed, but that out of which all this universe comes cannot be destroyed at all. *Vināśam avyayasya asya na kaścit kartum arhati,* 'none has the power to destroy that indestructible reality behind the universe'. *Avināśi tu tadviddhi,* 'know That to be indestructible'; that is also in this body as the Self, the Atman; what is 'there' is also 'here'. But, only in the human body, it can be realized; that is the supreme uniqueness of the human being. It is there in the animal body also, but that body will not help it to understand this truth. So,

अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ता: शरीरिण:।
अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्माद्युध्यस्व भारत॥१८॥

Antavanta ime dehā nityasyoktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ;
Anāśino'prameyasya tasmāt yudhyasva bhārata — 2. 18

'These bodies—of the eternal embodied one which is indestructible and indeterminable—have an end, it is said; therefore fight, O Arjuna.'

'Therefore, fight on, *tasmāt yuddhyasva.*' Why? Because of this truth: these bodies are *antavantaḥ,* 'they have an end'; end means death. Bodies die; you can never keep them for all time. Whose bodies are they?

Nityasyoktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ, ‘of that *śarīri,* the one that is embodied, who is *nitya,* eternal’; of the eternal Self these are perishable bodies. Know this truth. *Anāśino aprameyasya,* that Atman that is there in all these bodies, is *anāśi,* ‘without any destruction’, *aprameya,* ‘which cannot be measured’, which cannot be brought within the purview of speech and thought. That is called *aprameya.* Everything in the world can be brought within the limit of thought and speech, not the Atman, because it is eternally the subject, is eternally of the nature of pure Consciousness. As the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says (1. ii. 9): *Naiṣā tarkeṇa matirāpaneyā*—‘This Atman cannot be grasped through *tarka,* logical reasoning.’

य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं यश्चैनं मन्यते हतम्।
उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते॥१९॥

Ya enam vetti hantāram yaścainam manyate hatam;
Ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyam hanti na hanyate — 2. 19

‘Who considers the Atman as the slayer and who considers this Atman as the slain, both of them do not know that It does not kill nor is It killed.’

This verse 19 has attracted the attention of the American thinker, Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson has put this verse into a little versified form in one of his essays, as I have mentioned in the introduction. It is a wonderful book that influenced the then Transcendentalist movement of America in the last century. So, *nāyam hanti na hanyate*, ‘the Atman neither kills, nor is it the object of somebody’s killing’. That is the true nature of the Self. The next *śloka* expands it further:

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचि-
न्नायं भूत्वाऽभविता वा न भूयः।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो
न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे॥२०॥

Na jāyate mriyate vā kadācit
nāyam bhūtvā’bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ ;
Ajo nityaḥ śāśvato’yam purāṇo

na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre — 2. 20

'This Self is never born nor does It ever die; it is not something that having been born, It again ceases to be; unborn, eternal, and everlasting, this ancient One is not killed when the body is killed.'

This verse is similar to the one in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* almost verbatim. *Na jāyate,* 'the Atman has no birth'. Naturally, *na mriyate,* 'it has no death'. *Kadācit,* 'ever'. *Nāyam bhūtvā abhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ,* 'it is not that, having been, it again cease to be'; *ajo,* 'it is unborn'. *Jo,* means 'to be born'; from this the word genetic comes in the English language. So, *ajo,* without birth; *nityaḥ,* 'eternal'; *śāśvataḥ,* 'everlasting'; *purāṇo,* 'the very ancient One and yet ever fresh', that is the meaning of *purāṇaḥ* according to ādi Śaṅkarācārya*, purā api nava eveti purāṇaḥ,* 'ancient and yet ever fresh'. In the modern period, after about 5000 years of existence, a youthfulness has come to India. So, India has the quality which we find in the Atman. It is always *purāṇa*—though old, it is always fresh. *Na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre,* 'when the body is destroyed, the Atman is not touched'. The Atman remains absolutely untouched. Nobody can destroy the Atman, the true Self of the human being. That is the truth which is emphasized in the Upaniṣads as well as in the *Gītā*, again and again—the immortal nature of the human being. The *Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad* proclaimed all human beings as *amṛtasya putrāḥ* (2. 5). Even a bit of this awareness can give us tremendous strength, tremendous fearlessness and tremendous compassion. The same Atman is in every being. That makes us friendly to all, and brings out the spirit of love and service in inter-human relations. This knowledge is behind all ethical sense: a sense of oneness. Ethics always involves a sense of oneness between people and people. Then only ethical sense can operate. So, behind this ethical sense is the truth of fundamental unity. We are essentially one.

Behind this changing body-mind complex, there is something eternal, something infinite in man. That is the basic teaching of the sages of the Upaniṣads regarding the human being. We do not know it, but knowing or not knowing, doesn't make any difference to the truth. For, it is truth which was discovered and rediscovered, and placed before us for our own rediscovery, for our own redemption. We do not need someone from heaven

coming to redeem us. Our redemption is built into us, our eternal nature as the ever-free Atman. This is constantly emphasized in the Vedantic literature. So, in this first part of the second chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is speaking to all of us through Arjuna, *na jāyate mriyate vā kadācit*, 'this Atman has not got any birth, nor death', it is immortal, when the body goes it is always there. In his commentary in this section, Śaṅkarācārya says, 'even God has not the power to destroy the Self of human being'. Therefore, this Atman, in everyone of us, even in animals, insects, everywhere, is the innermost Self. The only difference is, animals cannot realize this truth. Only the human being has the organic capacity to realize this truth. That is the highest human uniqueness. Evolution has risen to that level in man, where from he can know the truth of the world around and the truth of one's own immortal Self as well. And when one discovers this truth, he or she becomes fulfilled; for, the whole journey of evolution at the human stage is towards this discovery—ultimately, the human being discovering one's own true nature as the immortal and infinite Atman in which the whole course of evolution finds its fulfilment.

This is the message of ancient Greece also through its great oracle of Delphi: 'Man know thyself'. You may know about the stars, the earth, about this and that; they are all welcome. But the greatest knowledge you can get is about yourself. When you know your true nature, that you are deathless, ever pure, unborn, etc., what a big change will come in your life and in your dealings with others. All crime, delinquency, all pettiness and meanness, will vanish from human life.

So, a little attention to this subject is absolutely essential for every human being. Fortunately, today this modern civilization, after two hundred years of study of the external world, completely relegating man to the backyard—you simply abolish yourself, you study only physical science—after these two hundred years of such study, it is slowly turning to this profoundest of all mystery—the Self in human being. What is my true nature? I see, I understand, even I understand the world, what is the nature of this 'I' which can have this power? This is a remarkable thing. So, various hints and suggestions have been put forth by many distinguished scientists to pinpoint the significance of this new area of study. The human being—*let us study him or her in depth*. All the troubles today in the world,

all the distortions of the human psyche, come from neglecting this study. Why am I petty? Why do I commit crime? If you ask this question, the answer is, I do not know my true nature. I think I am only this body, I am only the sensory-limited individual, this petty ego which is tied down within this genetic system. I don't know my true dimension.

Therefore, these verses deal with this central theme of Vedanta. First, we study the world outside; then we study the *human being* who studies that world: the human being, the *observer*; a wonderful word in modern science; what is the nature and status of this observer who experiences this world? We are now compelled to turn our searchlight on to the observer in physical science in its nuclear dimensions, where observation changes the nuclear phenomenon. Even the name of psychology is changing. One of the psychologists has called psychology 'psychology of being'. We have behavioural psychology, we have depth psychology of Freud—psycho-analysis, all these were there. But Abraham Maslow, the American psychologist, called this psychology in his book, 'psychology of being'. What is this Self of human being from which alone all knowledge comes? Let us not neglect it. If you want to live the intensest life, you must have a touch of the infinite Atman anew. This represents a new dimension coming in Western psychology. So, these verses carry a profound message to all of us. We may not realize its full significance immediately, but even a little bit of this truth will be of tremendous significance to us. Greater fulfilment, greater peace, will come out of that study. That is the importance of these verses. And so, in the next verse Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

वेदाविनाशिनं नित्यं य एनमजमव्ययम्।
कथं स पुरुषः पार्थ कं घातयति हन्ति कम्॥२१॥

Vedāvināśinam nityam ya enamajamavyayam;
Katham sa puruṣaḥ pārtha kam ghātayati hanti kam—2. 21

'Know This as indestructible, eternal, unborn, and undecaying; how can a person (who knows this truth), O Arjuna, cause anyone to be killed and whom can that person kill?'

One that knows this Atman, the Self in all, to be indestructible, *avināśi,* and changeless, without birth, and immutable. There is nothing in this manifested universe which answers to this description, except in this world of the Self. Outside, everything is destructible, changeable, etc., etc. This is one point where you will find the value of changelessness, indestructibility, etc., that is in the Self—the *pratyak* dimension of reality. Vedanta recognizes two dimensions for reality: one is called *parāk* dimension, the other is called *pratyak* dimension. Mind you, these are all scientific terms, coined by great sages of Vedanta, so precise and of international significance. *Parāk* means what is out there, which the senses reveal, we call it 'object' in English. That is an object, which you can touch and feel and see. That is called *parāk,* your finger points out to something outside. Then comes a wonderful new dimension, your finger turning to yourself. That is called *pratyak*, inward. After the study of the *parāk* dimension of nature outside, we suspect some mystery *within* us. What is that mystery? Then your finger turns back towards you. So, one is called *parāk-tattva,* and the other is *pratyak-tattva*—reality *out*, and reality *in*. Reality itself does not know any of these distinctions. For our sake, we use these distinctions. Keeping the body as the measuring rod, we say there is something *out there,* something *in here.* Similarly, *pratyak* and *parāk* are two dimensions of the *same* reality called nature. And, nature, of which Western physical science knows only its *parāk* aspect, Vedanta, with its unifying vision, recognizes nature's *parāk* and *pratyak* dimensions; that is nature in its comprehensive sense. Vedanta says: *Prakṛti*, or nature, has these two dimensions: *aparā prakṛti* and *parā prakṛti*. *Aparā* means ordinary, that is, the *parāk* dimension; *parā* means higher, that is the *pratyak* dimension. So, Vedanta recognizes that nature has two dimensions, *parāk* and *pratyak,* but, there are not two natures. There is only one nature with these two dimensions. In Western science, we study the *parāk* dimension, which includes also politics, economics, and other studies which deal with the *parāk* dimension. But, in those dealings, if you want to achieve real happiness and welfare, you must have a touch of the *pratyak* dimension. The more spiritual you are, the more you are able to handle the world around you, the more you radiate love and peace around you. These are the two great words: *parāk* and *pratyak* dimensions of *prakṛti.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling about this *pratyak* dimension. No sense organ can reveal to you this

truth. It is beyond its level. Not even this mind, controlled by the senses, can reveal this truth. How can we realize this truth? That is the teaching of the whole *Gītā*.

While working at home or in an office or factory, and in all inter-human relations, we can slowly realize this profound truth. That is how life has to be lived. A complete philosophy of life will include *parāk* and *pratyak* dimensions of nature. We shall handle the world outside. But we shall, through that handling, also realize our true nature. Now, this orientation through Śrī Kṛṣṇa's own original contribution, will come to you after the 38th verse of this chapter. Here only the first ideas of the *jñana* path are being given, the path of Self-realization. Śrī Kṛṣṇa wanted Arjuna's action to be based on this knowledge, but based on this knowledge, our tendency is 'not to act'. Let us realize this truth. Why should we run about here and there? That is the impression that you get. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa could not influence Arjuna to face the battle in front, basing upon this teaching. This teaching makes you feel like an ascetic, that is why this *jñāna-mārga,* based on *neti, neti,* 'not this, not this,' 'this world is *Māyā,* I don't want to have anything to do with it, let me realize the immortal, eternal dimension of Atman', acted on the minds of the people. Śrī Kṛṣṇa understood it after some time. Arjuna was not convinced through this philosophy that he should act, that he should face the challenges of life. Much better to go into a quiet corner and discover one's own true nature. But it is being presented here first by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, before he formulates his own more comprehensive spirituality *based on men and women at work*. In Śrī Kṛṣṇa's philosophy, there are two dimensions of spirituality: spirituality of work, and spirituality of meditation: both are combined into a comprehensive spirituality. That message will begin from the middle of this chapter. But before that, he is expounding this path of *jñāna*, which he will refer to in the later verses as *Sāṅkhya* path.

In India, we have seen for the last thousand years, this *jñāna-mārga* could not be digested properly by our people, only its negative aspects were emphasized. That made our people self-centred, quiet, not interested in whatever may be happening in the world outside, a certain amount of callousness developed, because we did not have the spiritual strength to digest this profound philosophy. And very often people become dry. We

never understood the next section of the second chapter called *yoga* or *buddhi yoga.* But now a healthy understanding of the *Gītā's* message of practical Vedanta is coming. That is the great contribution of Swami Vivekananda—the presentation of a comprehensive spirituality of the *Gītā*. Nobody needs say: I am a worldly person. Whether you are working, or dealing with the world in various ways, you are never worldly, you are in the world, but you are not worldly; you have some sense of your own spiritual nature, you are strengthening it day by day. So, it is all spirituality throughout. That is why Swami Vivekananda said, 'I do not call a man or a woman a Hindu, if he or she is not spiritual.' Our spirituality is pervasive. One need not go to Uttarakasi or Rishikesh to become spiritual; not at all. You are spiritual at home and at your work place. It is your birthright. 'Each soul is potentially divine,' says Vivekananda: everyone has just to recognize it and try to live it in whatever measure one can. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to tell one and all in the middle of the second chapter (2. 40): *svalpam api asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt,* 'even a little of this *dharma* will save one from great fear.' Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues:

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा-
न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही॥२२॥

Vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya
navāni gṛhṇāti naro'parāṇi ;
Tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāni
anyāni samyāti navāni dehī — 2. 22

'As the embodied person throws away a worn out dress and puts on a new one, so does the embodied Self discard worn out bodies and adopt other new ones.'

Whenever the wearing cloth becomes old, 'one quietly throws away the old cloth', *jīrṇāni yathā vihāya. Navāni gṛhṇāti naraḥ aparāṇi,* 'one adopts another fresh cloth'. That is what one normally does with one's clothing. *Tathā,* 'similarly', exactly similarly, *dehī,* 'the embodied person', *śarīrāṇi*

vihāya jīrṇāni, 'giving away a body when it has become *jīrṇa,* worn out', unfit for one's life's purposes, 'one quietly sheds it'; and, *anyāni samyāti,* 'takes a new body', to work out one's destiny, that is, one enters into another body.

This is the wonderful idea of death and rebirth in Vedanta. I shed my body. We have still the feeling, I was the body, now my body is finished. That attitude is there. So, it is the body point of view we all understand. But those who are very high spiritually, they understand that this body is like an old cloth, which we cast away and put on a new cloth. When Vivekananda passed away on 4 July 1902 at Belur Math, near Calcutta, a little after 9 p.m., Swami Ramakrishnananda, who was in Madras and was known as Sashi, had a dream that very night. He heard Vivekananda telling him: 'Sashi, Sashi, I have spat out my body.' And next day the telegram announcing Vivekananda's passing away came from Calcutta. Men and women like him can say, 'I have spat out the body.' Many don't have spiritual knowledge and experience. They think they are the body. They are sorry to lose it. And so, the idea that they are the eternal Self has not come to them yet. But, a little awareness is there. And that little understanding has spread throughout the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain society. What do we say about death?, 'we threw away the body', *śarīr choḍ diyā.* Even the commonest people's language in India is *śarīr choḍ diyā,* meaning, 'the body has been discarded'. In the West it is different. They have been taught, that the body is everything. So, when they die, the language used in English is, he lost his soul. That is why they preserve the body. We in India don't preserve the body; we burn it away. Sooner the better. All others preserve the body, even put all sorts of good things there. In ancient Egyptian religion, you will find that all the things needed by that person, especially the pharaohs, will be put into the grave. But, we burn it away. *Bhasmāntam śarīram,* as the sage in the *īśa Upaniṣad* said, 'let this body', which has been a good chemical laboratory for my life's purpose, now that it has become old and useless, 'be reduced to ashes'; let their components go back to their own chemical elements, is the language used in that *īśa Upaniṣad.* In the 10th *śloka* of chapter 15, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say later:

Utkrāmantam sthitam vāpi bhuñjānam vā guṇānvitam;
Vimūḍhā nānupaśyanti paśyanti jñānacakṣuṣaḥ —

'Two types of people, *vimūḍhāḥ,* 'foolish, short-sighted, sense-limited people' and *jñānacakṣuṣaḥ,* 'those who have got the eye of *jñāna*', the eye of wisdom, they see things differently. What is that? When you are living in the body, when you are experiencing the various delights of the body, or when you finally leave the body, there is something as the subject experiencing all the objects here; that truth is known only by the *jñānacakṣuṣaḥ,* man of subtle vision. *Utkrāmantam* means 'going out of the body', *sthitam vāpi,* 'when it is functioning in the body', *bhuñjānam vā guṇānvitam,* 'when experiencing through *sattva, rajas, tamas'*. This Self, ever present like this, *vimūḍhā nānupaśyanti,* 'foolish persons never understand this', *paśyanti jñānacakṣuṣaḥ,* 'those who have the eye of knowledge, *jñānacakṣu*, see this truth'. This is a central teaching only in this wonderful land of ours. From here it spread to various countries through the spread of Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. And most of the mystics of other religions in earlier periods also liked this idea. And today, this idea is spreading like wild fire all over the western world, especially in U.S.A., only because the alternative to this idea is the unscientific concept of the devil. All the evil in the world comes from the devil. And modern-minded people don't like the idea of the devil. When you banish the devil, you need some substitute. That substitute is: *karma* and *punarjanma* or rebirth, these together constitute the real substitute to that most unscientific notion of the devil in Western religious thought. That is going away, and this idea is spreading all over the world as being more reasonable, though it is not demonstrable. To the sages of India, it is a most satisfying truth. Sri Ramakrishna's example is so beautiful in this connection: Coconuts belong to two categories; green coconut and ripe coconut. In the green coconut, the kernel is attached to the shell. If you scoop the kernel, a little shell also comes along with it. That is our ordinary state of mind. We are attached to the body. Anything happening to the body will affect the self as well, and vice versa. But take the ripe coconut. We will hear the *kaḍa kaḍa* sound of the copra within when we shake the coconut. The kernel is separated from the shell. That is the example for spiritual realization.

In the West, one person in all history had realized this truth. And that person was Socrates. In the *Dialogues of Plato,* Plato describes Socrates facing death. Without a sense of courage, we cannot generally face death

with equanimity. We are frightened, we are depressed, etc., etc. In the case of Socrates, he had such a calm and peaceful and fearless mind, because of this deep knowledge that he was not the body, but the immortal Self. This event is expressed by Plato in his dialogues where, when Socrates is drinking the poison, all his young disciples sitting around him were emotionally upset and the only calm person in that audience was Socrates himself. Then Socrates chided them: 'I asked the ladies to go away, because they were crying a lot, it was not giving me the peace I need at the time of death; but you young people also are crying.' That is the chiding that he gave to the people around. Then one of them, an aged person named Crito, turned to Socrates and asked this question: 'Socrates, how shall we bury you?' The man is not dead yet! He is taking the poison; after a few minutes, the poison will act and he will die. But he is asking the question already: 'Socrates, how shall we bury you?' This question was greeted by Socrates with a gentle smile, saying, 'Crito, you must first catch me, the real me, before you ask this question.' See the language. Pure Vedanta, in every word of it. You must first catch me, the *real* me, before you ask that question, and he added: 'Be of good cheer, Crito. You refer to this body. As to the body, do with it what you do with other people.' There you can see that this particular knowledge of the immortality of the Atman gives absolute peace of mind, great composure, great courage, and the power to pacify people around also. Therefore, it is not a theory. It is an experience; but in the whole of Western history, it is only one such person, that we come across in Western literature. This greatness of that one person could not be understood by the people around, Athenians around, because their philosophy had no understanding of this higher dimension of the human being. Though the oracle of Delphi had told the Greeks, 'man, know thyself', they knew man only from the external point of view: eating, drinking, pleasure, comfort, and then imperialism and war was all that they knew. They were very gifted in all these fields. The only one who knew this truth was Socrates, and therefore the Greeks could not understand this man. And they brought a charge against him of misleading the youth. Imagine such a great soul being charged in the court by the Athenian state as one who misled the youth of Athens and was condemned to death by drinking hemlock or poison! What a tragic situation! The finest citizen has become the object of judgement by the people, because they could not understand

this higher spiritual dimension of the human personality. Everything else they could understand.

I used to tell people in Greece or other European countries or America: suppose Socrates was in India, what would have been the reaction? The Indian people would have understood him, and instead of killing him, would have treated him as a great sage. But the Greek culture never understood this spiritual dimension of the human personality. And anybody who teaches people things beyond their understanding, is liable to be persecuted or killed. The same thing happened to Jesus. He spoke something which the priests around him couldn't understand. And he was charged as an agent of the devil! And he was crucified. I remember, the famous remark of late Bertrand Russell: 'if you teach people faster than they can learn, you will be in trouble for yourself'. Socrates taught something which they could not understand, but Plato understood, a few others also understood. The mobs of Athens, democratic Athens, killed Socrates. And that made Plato hate democracy.

We have also the challenge of democracy before us in India today. And if we are guided by the broad and deep ideas of Vedanta, we shall be able to create a progressive humanist society in our country. If the broad Vedantic ideas do not influence our character, we may as well convert our democracy into the worst type of mobocracy. Even now there are such tendencies in our politics, manifested in our mobs going to the airport to receive a leader by breaking all rules and regulations, and violently enforcing a strike programme by a political party. When a little bit of this Vedantic discipline will come to our people, and it is my hope that it is going to come, we shall succeed in building a true democratic state and society in India. Our modern teachers like Vivekananda have asked us to effect a thorough social revolution from feudalism to democracy. We have many blots to wipe away before true democracy comes. That will come when education and culture reach our people. Not only education. Education can make us crude; and today I see a lot of young educated people, crude in their behaviour. But with culture, education will become a redeeming factor. I had said in some of my lectures in the West that this section of Plato's dialogues can be exactly a chapter in any one of our Upaniṣads. As for that, a British intellectual, E.J. Urwick, in his famous book, *The Message of Plato,* has

said, that you can never understand Plato and Socrates without studying the Upaniṣads, and, in his book, he gives various illustrations as well.

So, these verses dealing with the immortal nature of the human being are going to be a source of tremendous attraction to people in the modern age, to people in all parts of the world. We know only one part of life, that is life. We don't know the other part of life, that is death. Death and life are two aspects of the same reality. This is an ancient teaching in India's *Ìg-Veda*, the oldest book of humanity, *yasya chāyā amṛtam yasya mṛtyuḥ,* 'that reality, whose *chāyā* or shadow is immortality and mortality'. So, if you want to understand reality, you must understand life *and* death, not merely life. The Greeks understood only life. Lowes Dickinson, another great British scholar, writing on the life of Greece says: 'the Greeks understood life; they could never reconcile with death. When they were to die, they felt like being snatched by some power; they didn't like it at all.' But, with one exception, as I said; that is Socrates. He understood the meaning of life and death. In today's Western civilization, the same situation obtains in our lives; we don't know the meaning of death, and that the death of the body is not the death of the soul. Man is immortal. When these two are put together, fear of death will become less and less. And our India, particularly, needs this teaching more and more. We are so afraid of death. In fact, in my house, when I was very young, if I ever mentioned death, people used to tell me: 'Oh! no, don't talk of death at all! Why should we die even before death comes? That is the meaning of cowardice. 'Cowards die many times in their life, but the valiant taste of death but once,' said Shakespeare. That is literally true. A nation which fears death, cannot be great. Only if you can face death, you become great. That lesson Swami Vivekananda taught us in this modern period. So, this *śloka* says there:

Vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya
navāni gṛhṇāti naro'parāṇi;
Tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāni
anyāni samyāti navāni dehī—

This is what we do every day with our dress. And the soul does that at the time of death. This cloth is old, this body is old, let me get a new one. But there are occasions, when you throw away even a good cloth. That is

why, even when the body is young, we have to face death often. But, normally we discard the cloth when it is torn and old, then get a new one. Similarly, a body which has become useless for our purpose, death comes at that time. Majority of people die only when they are old and decrepit; not when they are young, their number is much less, percentage-wise. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues:

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः॥२३॥

Nainam chindanti śastrāṇi nainam dahati pāvakaḥ;
Na cainam kledayantyāpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ— 2. 23

'No weapons can cut this Atman, no fire can burn It, no water can wet It, no air can dry It.'

This Self, the Atman, 'no weapons can cut it', etc. That is the nature of the Atman. Take mind, for example. You can't cut your mind, you can't wound your mind, cannot do any such thing. Though as a self, as an ego, I may feel wounded. But a mind has no wound at all. We associate ourselves with these kinds of limitations of the body and we say we are also wounded. But nobody can cut the mind. It is so subtle; it is not a material thing. Still more subtle is the Atman. Naturally, no fire can burn it, no water can wet it, etc. Then He positively says:

अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च।
नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः॥२४॥

Acchedyo'yamadāhyo'yamakledyo'śoṣya eva ca;
Nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthāṇuracalo'yam sanātanaḥ — 2. 24

'This Self cannot be cut, nor can it be burnt, nor wetted, nor dried. Changeless, all-pervading, unmoving, immovable, this Self is eternal.'

That is a repetition of the same idea.

Again and again, the truth is pressed upon us: we are not this body-mind complex. Within this there is something profound. This is like a gem-box. The box looks very beautiful, but the gem inside is more valuable; don't

forget that. That idea is repeated again and again even in our mystical literature. The Holy Name of God is like a gem: *Rām-ratan maine pāyo,* in a famous Hindi song by Meera Bai, 'I have received the gem of Rāma's Name'. It is immortal, by which all fear vanishes, etc., etc. So, we have been taught this again and again by great mystics and spiritual teachers. *Gītā* is expressing it here in these verses:

अव्यक्तोऽयमचिन्त्योऽयमविकार्योऽय-मुच्यते।
तस्मादेवं विदित्वैनं नानुशोचितुमर्हसि॥२५॥

Avyakto'yamacintyo'yam avikāryo'yam ucyate;
Tasmādevam viditvainam nānuśocitumarhasi —2. 25

'The Atman is said to be unmanifested, beyond thought, beyond modification; knowing It as such, it is not proper for you to grieve.'

This Atman is said to be unmanifested. We can't feel the touch of the Atman anywhere. *Avyakta* means unmanifested. Similarly, *acintya,* unthinkable. You cannot catch it with a piece of thought. You cannot conceptualize it. Everything in the world we try to catch through two sources: one is thought, the other is speech. Once you give a speech and a thought to enclose something, you say you understand that thing. We can do this with everything in the world. But with regard to the Atman, speech and thought recoil unable to touch it. That is why It is unthinkable. In fact, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1. 4. 7) spoke of realizing the Atman in these words: *ātmā iti eva upāsīta*. On this Śankarācarya comments:

Yah tu ātmaśabdasya iti paraḥ prayogaḥ, ātmaśabdapratyayoḥ ātmatatvasya paramārthato aviṣayatva jñāpanārtham. Anyathā ātmānam upāsīta iti evam avakṣyat

'The use of the particle *iti* (thus) along with the word *ātman*, or "Self", to which you referred, in the text, only signifies that the truth of the ātman is really beyond the scope of the term and the concept "Self". Otherwise, the *śṛuti* would only say, one should meditate upon the *ātman*.' We have to use some word; so we use the word Atman. But don't run away, Atman is not a thing. It is eternal Consciousness behind all things. That is stressed again and again. So, *avyakto'yam acintyo'yam.* One beautiful verse

demonstrating the profound depth of psychological insight occurs in a verse in the *Aṣṭāvakra-Gītā: Acintyam cintyamāno'pi cintārūpam bhajatyasau*, 'when you think of the unthinkable, you resort to a piece of thought only'. When you think of the unthinkable, you don't catch that unthinkable at all. You formulate a thought, that is all. It is an object. Thought is an object. This is the unthinkable Self, eternal Self.

Now, this kind of subtle knowledge of these deep realities, you get not only in Indian literature but also in Chinese philosophy of Tao, in Zen Buddhism, and in some of the writings of Christian and Muslim mystics; but, not in their official religions, formal religions. There is this truth beyond all conceptualization. That is the Atman, eternal Self, the subject, the seer, and not an object. Similarly, *avikāryo'yam,* this is unchangeable. The whole world is changeable. This is unchangeable. The external world is simply a tissue of change. This Atman never changes, eternally the same. That is the one truth the world is seeking. What is that eternal, changeless reality? Formerly, we used the word God for it. But, the word God has become involved in so many controversies. And ultimately, some people said we don't want God. In fact, it was the German philosopher Nietzsehe, in the last century, who said, god is dead. Well, that kind of god has no status at all. But Vedantic God is quite different. It is the eternal Self. It is always the witness of every event. Every 'yes' and 'no' is watched by the eternal Self. Therefore, this has got a strong foundation in experience, in your own Self.

This was the experience Śrī Ramaṇa Maharṣi had when he was a boy of 16 or 17, the first and last spiritual experience of his, when he felt 'I am going to die', became frightened, came home, lay down in his room on the floor, and said to himself: 'I am dying, I am dying', and he imitated the whole experience of death. 'Yes, I am just dying.' And I am dead. Then he found to his great joy that he was still there to watch his death. 'I' am deathless, the one who watches my death is always there. That is my true Self. That was his first and last spiritual experience according to his own words. Of course, he got it so easily because he had high spiritual development earlier, with good *vāsanas* and *samskāras.* We may not get it so easily. But, even if you get a glimpse of the truth, 'yes, there is some truth in it,' work on it. That much is enough for us to begin with. So,

tasmādevam viditvainam, ‘knowing Him to be like this’, *na anuśocitum arhasi.* ‘It is not fit for you to experience grief’. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa changes the line of argument:

अथ चैनं नित्यजातं नित्यं वा मन्यसे मृतम्।
तथापि त्वं महाबाहो नैवं शोचितुमर्हसि॥२६॥

Atha cainam nityajātam nityam vā manyase mṛtam;
Tathāpi tvam mahābāho nainam śocitumarhasi — 2. 26

‘Even if you think that this Self has constant birth and constant death, even then, O strong-armed one, it is not fit for you to mourn.’

The next verse clarifies this:

जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च।
तस्मादपरिहार्येऽर्थे न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि॥२७॥

Jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyuḥ dhruvam janma mṛtasya ca;
Tasmādaparihārye’rthe na tvam śocitumarhasi — 2. 27

‘Whoever is born, to him or her death is certain; to the dead, birth also is certain; it is not, therefore, fit for you to mourn for this unavoidable fact.’

‘Whoever is born will have to die’, *jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyuḥ.* Anybody who is born, must die. One English poet says, ‘our hearts are beating funeral marches to the grave’. That is one way of putting the truth, that if you have life, you will have death also. ‘Therefore’, *tasmāt aparihārye’rthe,* ‘in this inescapable situation’, *na tvam śocitum arhasi,* ‘it does not behove you to experience sorrow and grief’. Then a very profound idea comes in the next verse:

अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत।
अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना॥२८॥

Avyaktādīni bhūtāni vyaktamadhyāni bhārata;
Avyaktanidhanānyeva tatra kā paridevanā— 2. 28

‘Beings come from the unseen, in between they become the seen, and they return also to the unseen; what is there to be worried about?’

All beings are *avyakta*, ‘unmanifest’, in the beginning, *vyakta,* ‘manifest’ in the middle, and *avyakta* again, in the end. That is a very famous utterance.

In the *Mahābhārata,* in its *Sanatsujātīya* section of the *Śānti Parva,* there is a beautiful expression of the same truth: *adarśanāt āpatitaḥ punaśca adarśanam gataḥ,* ‘we came from *adarśana,* the unseen, and we go back to *adarśana,* the unseen’. That is our everyday experience. Let the truth be known. There is a past, there is a future, and in between there is the present. Let us do as well as we can in that present state. This is a very difficult subject, but it is also a profound truth. Extreme subtlety of thinking is needed to comprehend even a little bit of it. That is expressed in the next verse:

आश्चर्यवत्पश्यति कश्चिदेन-
माश्चर्यवद्वदति तथैव चान्यः।
आश्चर्यवच्चैनमन्यः शृणोति
श्रुत्वाप्येनं वेद न चैव कश्चित्॥२९॥

āścaryavatpaśyati kaścidenam
āścaryavadvadati tathaiva cānyaḥ;
āścaryavaccainamanyaḥ śṛṇoti
śrutvāpyenam veda na caiva kaścit — 2. 29

‘Some see this (truth) as a wonder; some others speak of It similarly as a wonder; some others hear about It as a wonder; some others even after hearing of It, do not understand it at all.’

Some see this truth as an *āścarya,* a wonder; so also some speak and hear about It as a wonder. But very few understand It. A tremendous mystery is this Atman. It is there, but It doesn’t allow you to detect It all the time. That is a hidden truth. In fact, one of the British poets of the last century, Robert Browning, who was very much influenced by Vedantic ideas, has written a poem called *Paracelsus*. In that poem he speaks of the

Atman as the *imprisoned splendour*. There is a profound splendour in every one of us, but It is imprisoned by the body-mind complex. You have to release that imprisoned splendour. That is spiritual life. *Eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu gūḍho ātmā na prakāśate,* says the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*: 'This Atman is present in every being, but *gūḍho,* hidden', very, very mysterious. *Na prakāśate,* 'It does not manifest'. That is the truth, but we can realize It. We can release that splendour from its imprisoned state. That is what we do in our spiritual life. All hatred and violence, all exploitation will go, when a little light of the Atman will light up your day-to-day life and human relationships. So, this concept of the 'imprisoned splendour' is a very beautiful concept.

This Atman remains a mystery all through. But it can be cleared. It can be realized by appropriate methods. That is the Vedantic technique of spiritual life and spiritual realization. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, this very expression comes (I. ii. 7), *āścaryo vaktā kuśalo'sya labdhā, āścaryo jñātā kuśalānuśiṣṭaḥ*. 'The teacher of the Atman must be an *āścarya,* a wonderful person, the student of the Atman must also be an *āścarya';* when these two come together, that is, 'when taught by an efficient teacher, the one who realizes the Atman also is wonderful'. So, you stand before this great mystery in wonder, worshipping It. What else can we do with It? We can only silently meditate upon It, worship It. We can't capture It by our mind, by our thought. That is the nature of this supreme truth which is so close to ourselves as our Self, but so far away from us, from our understanding. The Upaniṣads repeat this idea. It is very near to you and It is very far from you. To the ignorant, It is far; to the knowing, It is near. The whole centre of human freedom is in that particular mystery. When you realize It, you become truly free. Other freedoms are necessary; but this freedom is the freedom of all freedoms. You may have all the wealth and power, but you may be absolutely unfree. But with this knowledge of your true nature, even though you may not have many material possessions, you will be really free in the true sense of the term.

So, that is how verse 29 has brought before us this tremendous mystery, this imprisoned splendour, and the challenge to you, to me, and to everyone else, is how to release it from that genetic prison. Let it come out. Let it manifest. So, Vivekananda defines religion in one scientific sentence: 'Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man.' It is hidden;

let it manifest. What a change will come in human life and in inter-human relations, when a little of this divinity manifests in our life! That is the great teaching that is being expounded in the *Gītā*. We are just at the beginning. Through all the eighteen chapters, we shall be in the midst of this great theme. And the whole world is the audience today for the *Gītā*. Formerly, only some people of India, not even the majority of our people were benefited by its message. Today, the whole world is increasingly eager to get a copy of the *Gītā*. Recently, a seeker from Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, wrote to me, 'We don't know anything, we have got one or two books. Please send us some other books. We are hungry for these ideas.' That is the situation in the world today.

Even in physical science, when you look at a small living cell, to the scientist it is a marvel. A marvel of construction, a marvel of organic activity within itself, creating, withdrawing, shaping, multiplying—it is a marvel. Even in the science of physics, it is a marvel to see that a tiny piece of matter can contain enormous energy; that is nuclear science. We can say regarding that also, *āścaryavat paśyati*. When you probe deep into nature, the wonder that you see outside becomes less, and greater wonders within nature become revealed to you. Similarly, looking at man, and that study has only just started in the West. As Sir Julian Huxley said: 'The study of the mind has just begun.' Shakespeare has expressed, 'how wonderful a thing is man', in a famous passage. This man can control this world, he can understand it, he can transcend it, what is that something in him which is such a marvel? Earlier, I referred to the term coined by Robert Browning, the British poet, 'the imprisoned splendour'. When modern science, in its psychology and neurology, will probe deeper and deeper into man, this marvel will be revealed increasingly. The study of the brain itself is a tremendous marvel. How the brain operates, how the various cells work together, and then produce a coherent life and reaction to the world, all these are subjects of marvel. But the most marvellous is what the Upaniṣads are dealing with, the infinite Atman. Behind this body-mind complex, which is so tiny, which is so contracted an organism compared to the world outside, yet within that is something tremendous, that is the biggest challenge before modern thought. Indian thought faced it successfully long

long ago. That is what you find expressed in these verses: *āścaryavat paśyati kaścit enam.*

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, *Śiva* realizing his own infinite *Śiva*-nature, couldn't control himself and started dancing. Generally, you dance when you overflow in energy. Then only you will dance. If you are weak in energy, you will never dance. An expansion of energy within will make you dance. *Śiva's* dance is a result of that. He Himself is amazed to see the *Śiva*-nature within Himself. He is *Śiva*, the infinite one. So, these are the beautiful ideas coming out of this profound discovery of the Self of man.

Vivekananda says (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 2, p. 250): 'No books, no scriptures, no science can ever imagine the glory of the Self that appears as man… .' This is a remarkable reality. Normally, we are creaturely individuals with very limited powers. But we suspect that there is something very profound within every human being. That suspicion turns into a marvel, when he or she tries to understand the truth. And later on, it becomes a matter of realization.

It was in the eighteenth century when the French philosopher and mystic, Pascal, said:

'In space, the universe engulfs me and reduces me to a pinpoint. But, through thought, *I understand that universe.*'

What must be my true dimension then? Am I merely a speck of dust? No, that speck of dust contains a tremendous splendour. That is the Atman, the subject of this marvel. If this experience of the world through the sense organs is wonderful, million, million times more wonderful will be that experience of the Atman 'imprisoned' within. That profound truth has fascinated the Indian mind for centuries. After the Upaniṣads, our people were inspired by this discovery. I must know this truth. That is why so many people went to the forests and caves for meditation, just to realize this profound truth. None of the technologies of physical science can help us there. And so you find rock caves, here, there, all over India. And in history, India produced a Buddha. A man who really penetrated into this 'imprisoned splendour', and realized this immortal truth. He was full of joy for seven days and nights, and was walking up and down under that very

tree under which he realized this truth. That tree later came to be called *bodhi-vṛkṣa,* tree of enlightenment. So, this verse 29 is expressing that marvel. The human being is not a speck of dust, is not a creature, but is free. Within him or her there is something wonderful; that is the one truth we must impress upon all our children. That is the first Vedantic teaching for every child, a teaching which the child will realize as true, as it grows up and becomes mature. That is the one truth that is central to all Vedantic teaching. So, verse 30 tells us:

देही नित्यमवध्योऽयं देहे सर्वस्य भारत।
तस्मात्सर्वाणि भूतानि न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि॥३०॥

Dehī nityamavadhyo'yam dehe sarvasya bhārata;
Tasmātsarvāṇi bhūtāni na tvam śocitumarhasi — 2. 30

'The One that all bodies enclose is eternally free from being killed; therefore, you (Arjuna) need not grieve for all beings.'

This *dehī,* 'the Self'; *dehī* means one who lives in the *deha,* or body; *nityam avadhyo'yam,* 'none can destroy the *dehī* at any time'. That is the nature of this infinite truth. *Dehe sarvasya bhārata,* 'in all bodies', this Self or the *dehī* is indestructible, O Arjuna'. *Tasmāt sarvāṇi bhūtāni na tvam śocitum arhasi,* 'you need not, therefore, grieve for any entity, any being, in this world'. You can never touch that real dimension of the human system. Somebody takes away my shirt, that has not affected me. I can take another shirt. In that way we speak of material things. But those who know the subject, whatever you may do with the body, my Self is untouched. If that is kept intact, then there will be nothing to worry. Stronger the person, the more is the capacity to express this truth in life and action; greater courage, greater endurance will come to him or her. Like that Jewish scientist in Hitler's Nazi prison: they were all subjected to tremendous pressure, all sorts of persecution, torture, suffering; many perished in that kind of treatment. But one survived. And he, Victor Frankil—he now lives in New York—wrote a book, *Man's Search For Meaning.* And there he mentions, that he was subjected to so much of pressure, so much of persecution. He would have broken down, but he detached himself from the body, began to think of himself as a *sākṣi,* as a witness to what was going on, as the Self.

He could stand all this pressure on him. His mind was undisturbed at the end of the war; so, he could write this book as a result of those experiences. He calls that method 'attitude control'. You cannot control what others do to you, but you can control your attitude towards those things. That is in your hands. There is a very remarkable statement made by Victor Frankil in his *Man's Search For Meaning.* Somebody abuses me; well, he abused me and went away. I took it in, I nourished it, and it became a serious thing for me. I even went to commit suicide, because I am weak. If I am strong, I will say to myself: 'well, he has said a few words. What indeed did he say?, All the twenty-six alphabets put together in a particular order'. That way you can say to yourself and dismiss the whole thing. That needs lot of strength. So, attitude control is a very great lesson for all of us. Mostly we are our own enemies. We create trouble for ourselves. Others give only a little trouble. We multiply it by ourselves. There, attitude control can save the situation. That it is true, was proved. Victor Frankil further refers to it in American second World War hospitals in Italy. One ward was full of highly wounded personnel, hand is gone, leg is gone, such kinds of people; there was great suffering. In another ward, there were soldiers with minor injuries from the battle. They were also under treatment. An investigation showed that soldiers who had serious injuries, were more peaceful, more co-operative; the less injured people, the investigation found, were full of complaint, stress, and had no peace of mind; that was something strange. How could it be explained? These people (the severely injured) should have been much more in distress, than these people (with minor injuries). Then they found, on investigation, the power of attitude. In the case of these less injured people, they were people who would be soon treated, set right, and they know they will be sent to the front once again. But, in the ward in which the more injured were housed, they knew that the war was over for them, they would go back to their wife and children. They were perfectly at peace. The leg is gone, doesn't matter. We shall live with our people.

Now, here we can see two situations, and two reactions to these two situations. So, it proves the idea of attitude control, and that book gives you this truth, which only brings into prominence the great truths of the *Gītā*. The author who suffered in Nazi prison developed attitude control and could write a book to enlighten other people. So, these are the truths. After

reading that book which confirms our super-sensory and spiritual nature, anyone will come closer to that marvel that is our true nature. That is what the *Gītā* tells us. And the *Gītā* specially stresses that this marvel can be realized in the context of human life, work, and inter-human relations. You need not have a separate life for it. 'Life itself is religion,' as Vivekananda said, because spirituality is my true nature. I have not to borrow it from somebody. So, this concept of the inherent divinity of man is at the back of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's teaching throughout this book hereafter. In this first part of the second chapter, he is using these arguments to tell Arjuna, 'why are you afraid of the world, of entering into the battle, you are not an ascetic, you have got so many things to do here'. All this is being argued about to make Arjuna take part in the war in front. Many more worldly arguments will come later, when he found these arguments did not click with Arjuna. Yes, he used worldly arguments also; these are coming in the next few verses.

स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमर्हसि।
धर्म्याद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते॥३१॥

Svadharmam api cāvekṣya na vikampitumarhasi;
Dharmyāddhi yuddhācchreyo'nyatkṣatriyasya na vidyate—2. 31

'From the point of view of your own *dharma*, it is not fit for you to waver; for a *kṣatriya* there is nothing more auspicious than a just war.'

Even from the point of view of your own *dharma,* you should not recoil from this challenge before you, because, for a *kṣatriya,* a war is a producer of glory. It is a very doubtful proposition that a war can be righteous. Two or three weeks ago, I had the occasion to say that the war against the Nazi movement in Germany was a righteous war; the whole world would have been completely distorted, if the Nazi movement had won the war. So, the whole world joined together to fight against that pernicious doctrine of racial superiority and military despotism, which destroyed millions of people. Occasionally, occasions of a righteous war will come. But not every war is righteous; a war of aggression to subdue other people can never be a righteous war. All war for defending a nation's freedom is righteous. On the contrary, if you don't do it, you will pay for it, and your coming generations will pay for it. Therefore, the words, *svadharmamapi cāvekṣya: svadharma,*

that is, your *dharma;* the *kṣatriya* has to protect the freedom of the people. So, that is the nature of a *kṣatriya*. Today, we have the old Indian concept in a new situation. The old *kṣatriya* is today a politician, a soldier, and an administrator. What is his work? His work is to protect the people, nourish the people, serve the people. Somebody *has* to do it. It is the political and administrative system that does these things. Even the policeman protects you from being robbed when you are asleep; though often they don't succeed in it, and so many are robbed at night. That shows the inefficiency of our administration and the indiscipline in our society. So, in this way, the politician, the administrator, and all defence services including the civil defence services like the police, they also belong to the *kṣatriya* class. Their work is to serve others with their power, their energy. They handle power. But the power is for the service of the people. That is the nature of that power. So, when Yudhiṣṭhira wanted to renounce the kingdom after the *Mahābhārata* war, Bhīṣma told him—it is a very interesting sentence—in the *Mahābhārata Śānti Parva*: *Daṇḍa eva hi rājendra kṣatra-dharmo na muṇḍanam,* 'Oh! Supreme King, the duty of a *kṣatriya* is *daṇḍa,* meaning exercise of power to serve the people, and not *muṇḍana,* shaving the head and becoming an ascetic.' That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna: *dharmyāddhi yuddhācchreyo'nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate,* 'a *kṣatriya* is happy to fight a war which has a great cause to inspire it', a human liberation war, for example. But to claim every war as *dharmya,* cannot be accepted. Actually, history will condemn some wars, which were thought to be *dharmya,* but were not *dharmya* in a later kind of study. So also, this one is perfectly *dharmya,* to protect your national freedom. A defensive war is always *dharmya;* offensive wars, some are, some are not. Very few are. Most are not. Just like what India has done in sending, at the request of the U.N., some soldiers and officers to monitor the peace between Iran and Iraq. Similarly, we sent our army to Congo and Korea, all for peacekeeping purposes. These are all very good examples where you are not there for aggression, not for gaining some property or land for yourself, but to establish the peace that was broken earlier. So, all these arguments are included in this particular statement: *Dharmyāddhi yuddhācchreyo'nyatkṣatriyasya na vidyate,* 'there can be no better opportunity for a *kṣatriya* to exercise one's intelligence, ability, and love for

humanity, than to take part in a battle to establish human values, freedom, and dignity of the individual person'. Then in this case, the next *śloka* says:

यदृच्छया चोपपन्नं स्वर्गद्वारमपावृतम्।
सुखिनः क्षत्रियाः पार्थ लभन्ते युद्धमीदृशम्॥३२॥

Yadṛcchayā copapannam svargadvāramapāvṛtam;
Sukhinaḥ kṣatriyāḥ pārtha labhante yuddhamīdṛśam—2. 32

'The *kṣatriya* is happy when he gets this type of war which comes unsought and which opens the doorway to (hero's) heaven.'

This war is, *yadṛcchayā ca upapannam,* you didn't seek it, 'it has come by itself', *yadṛcchayā,* 'by chance'; *svargadvāram-apāvṛtam,* 'the doors of heaven are open'. *Sukhinaḥ kṣatriyāḥ pārtha labhante yuddham-īdṛśam,* 'a *kṣatriya* is happy if he gets such opportunities to exercise his military talent'. Other aspects he won't like. That is why much of the army is dissatisfied when they are employed in stopping civil disturbances, killing one's own people. They are not happy at all. And no nation should do it except in rare emergency circumstances. This war is *yadṛcchayā upapannam,* 'it has come by chance'; the Pāṇḍavas wanted to avoid it. But the Kauravas had no such qualms. Nobody accepts war as a necessity. The *Mahābhārata,* of which the *Gītā* is a part, always stresses the avoidance of war. Try to seek peace always. In this great epic, a war-like attitude is not there; a war-like philosophy is not there. But, war is there, because of the disparity in the human situation; there are occasions for self-protection, and any activity that ensures that self-protection, is to be resorted to. In that sense only war is used in the *Mahābhārata* context. The book is spiritual and the greatest leader of the Pāṇḍavas is Yudhiṣṭhira, a man of peace, with no hatred to anybody; his another name is also very significant, *Ajātaśatru*, one whose enemy is yet to be born. His brothers also were of this nature, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is also advising them to forsake war, and enter into negotiations with the Kauravas. If you study the totality of the *Mahābhārata,* you will never find that it is a book of war. But war was developing. Human nature has become corrupt in many ways; arrogance, pride and all these things came. So, you can see various incidents leading up to the Kurukṣetra war. There was no possibility of settling it otherwise.

When the *Mahābhārata* serial will be screened in the New Delhi Doordarshan, you will see the story developing in small ways, developing into the biggest civil war that we had in ancient times, about 1400 BC., which really destroyed many of our people and our culture. Things took a different turn thereafter. The *Mahābhārata* war is a big turning point in the history of our own country. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna:

अथ चेत्त्वमिमं धर्म्यं संग्रामं न करिष्यसि।
ततः स्वधर्मं कीर्तिं च हित्वा पापमवाप्स्यसि॥३३॥

Atha cettvamimam dharmyam samgrāmam na kariṣyasi;
Tataḥ svadharmam kīrtim ca hitvā pāpamavāpsyasi—2. 33

'If you do not fight this righteous war, then, deviating from your righteous duty and fame, you will incur sin.'

If you don't face this battle now, Arjuna, what happens to you? *Tataḥ svadharmam kīrtim ca hitvā*, 'you will destroy your own *dharma* and your own great name', *pāpam avāpsyasi,* and 'incur sin'.

अकीर्तिञ्चापि भूतानि कथयिष्यन्ति तेऽव्ययाम्। संभावितस्य चाकीर्तिर्मरणादतिरिच्यते॥३४॥

Akīrtiñcāpi bhūtāni kathayiṣyanti te'vyayām;
Sambhāvitasya cākīrtirmaraṇādatiricyate — 2. 34

'People will recount your infamy for long; for a person of honour, infamy is worse than death.'

Other people will also speak ill of you. You will be the butt end of ridicule from other people. They will say that Arjuna was a coward, he ran away from battle. And to one who has already achieved a place of honour, to lose that honour is worse than death itself. That is a wonderful statement. You get it in English, 'death before dishonour'; this is exactly what we had long ago in the *Mahābhārata: Sambhāvitasya cākīrtirmaraṇāt atiricyate,* 'death is better than living in dishonour'. That is the wonderful idea. All heroic people think that way. Many of our people today do not understand this truth. The sense of personal honour and self-respect is going down and

down. I am prepared to be dishonoured, but I want only money, nothing else. When money plays a greater part in human life, honour becomes less and less important; decent people want honour, and will not exchange honour for money. Earlier, I had given the example of late Chittaranjan Das of Calcutta, whose father died in debt and insolvency, because of poverty. And Das became a lawyer. In the first case he got some money. What did he do with that money? The first thing he did was to go to the court, take the dead father's name from that dishonour of insolvency. That is an example of personal honour being superior to money. That lesson we have to learn in a new way. We have lost it for the last few decades. Today, some people do not mind at all losing all their honour; still they walk about in society as if they are big people. He becomes the centre. He will write a book and make a million rupees out of that book. That is the current state in our society and elsewhere also.

भयाद्रणादुपरतं मंस्यन्ते त्वां महारथाः।
येषां च त्वं बहुमतो भूत्वा यास्यसि लाघवम्॥३५॥

Bhayādraṇāduparatam mamsyante tvām mahārathāḥ;
Yeṣām ca tvam bahumato bhūtvā yāsyasi lāghavam—2. 35

'Great heroes will consider that you have run away from battle out of fear'; *yeṣām ca tvam bahumato bhūtvā yāsyasi lāghavam*, 'they who honoured you till now, will now belittle you.'

अवाच्यवादांश्च बहून्वदिष्यन्ति तवाहिताः।
निन्दन्तस्तव सामर्थ्यं ततो दुःखतरं नु किम्॥३६॥

Avācyavādāmśca bahūnvadiṣyanti tavāhitāḥ;
Nindantastava sāmarthyam tato duḥkhataram nu kim—2. 36

'Your enemies will speak against you all manner of words, not fit to be spoken; they will be deriding your capacities and talents.' *Tato duḥkhataram nu kim,* 'what can be more unhappy than that?' So, give up this cowardice. Face up to your problems, is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's final advice to Arjuna in verse 37.

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम्।
तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः॥३७॥

Hato vā prāpsyasi svargam jitvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm;
Tasmāduttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛtaniścayaḥ —2. 37

Hato vā prāpsyasi svargam, 'if you are killed, you will get *vīra-svargam,* heaven meant for heroes.' 'Or, if you conquer, you will enjoy the earth; therefore, stand up, O Arjuna, with the firm determination to fight.'

Today, how much we remember the Rajput heroes who faced foreign invaders and gave up their lives with honour and dignity! We remember them, we honour them even today. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna: *jitvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm,* 'suppose you win the battle, you will enjoy dominion in this world.' So, either way, you are not a loser. That is the appeal to all heroic sentiments in a human being. *Tasmāduttiṣṭha kaunteya,* 'therefore, stand up, O! Arjuna.' *Kaunteya* means the son of Kuntī. *Yuddhāya kṛtaniścayaḥ,* 'fully determined to face up to the war situation that has come', 'I shall not run away, I shall face this problem,' with that determination, stand up.

As I said in the beginning, when I was dealing with the first chapter, Arjuna had a real war to face. You and I do not have real wars to face. But the *Gītā* teaching is relevant to all of us, because the nature of war for you and me is day-to-day problems. We have to face them. We have to overcome them, summon enough energy from within to face up to all this. That is the philosophy which also has given to one universal application. Śaṅkarācārya referred to Śrī Kṛṣṇa making Arjuna an instrument, *arjunam nimittī kṛtya,* to teach the rest. Whether you are here in India, or in America, or in Europe, Soviet Russia, China, the philosophy remains the same. It need not be always for a person who has actually to kill somebody in battle. Not at all. So, from now onwards, you are taking a particular instance and putting it in a universal context. A profound philosophy of life and action is being expounded hereafter. Its intention was to make Arjuna face up to the battle situation. But its intention with respect to you and me is to make us courageous and strong, and face up to life's challenges. A human being must show that he or she is the master of the environment. He should not

become a creature of the environment. To restore the human being to that dignity, you need a philosophy. That is the philosophy Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to expound throughout this book. It is a philosophy of life, very practical, that is why, in the next few verses, the Gītāwill call it *yoga.* I am teaching you *yoga.* But when I say *yoga* merely, we only recall *prāṇāyāma,* or standing on the head, and all these physical exercises. Nothing of that is meant here. It is a practical philosophy of life, how to handle this wonderful human situation, by which you develop your own spiritual consciousness within, and you become instrumental for the happiness and welfare of the people around you. *That is the philosophy of a comprehensive spirituality that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is expounding, calling it by that short word yoga.* We will come to it a few verses later. *Tasmāt uttiṣṭha,* 'therefore, stand up'. Don't lie down, don't be lazy, don't be cosy. Be alert, be energetic, be active. Buddha also said, be always alert. There is a tendency for us to be cozy and lazy. That should not be. So, in Vedanta you will find this *uttiṣṭhata, jāgrata,* 'arise, awake', a constant refrain. No, life is for the hard-working people, not for the weak, not for the sleepy, not for the lazy; that message comes again and again, like the famous Sanskrit verse, popular verse, coming from ancient times:

Udyamena hi siddhyanti kāryāṇi na manorathaiḥ;
Na hi suptasya simhasya praviśanti mukhe mṛgāḥ—

'It is through *udyama,* hard work, industrious activity, that you achieve things in this world'; *na manorathiaḥ*, 'not by daydreaming', simply by imagining, I shall do this, I shall do that; that is called *manoratha,* carrying your mind as a *ratha,* as a chariot, and flying about in the air. That is not the way. Then an example is given: A *simha* or lion has become a little old. It stopped pursuing its prey; it will just lie down with a wide-open mouth with the belief that some deer will oblige it by entering into its mouth. That way the lion will not get any food. It has to work hard to get its food for the day; that is the example given in that verse. Similarly, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling all humanity to work hard to enjoy life.

Now, from verse 38, you will be hearing a new music. *That music is the powerful music of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's original philosophy, a philosophy of life developed from the philosophy of practical Vedanta, from the science of*

human possibilities developed in the ancient Upaniṣads. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is expounding the technical application of that science for total human development from verse 38 of this second chapter onwards.

What does Śrī Kṛṣṇa say?

सुखदु:खे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ।
ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि॥३८॥

Sukhaduḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau;
Tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivam pāpamavāpsyasi —2. 38

'Having made pain and pleasure, gain and loss, conquest and defeat, the same, engage yourself then in battle. So shall you incur no sin.'

Keep your mind even, *sukhaduḥkhe,* 'in happiness and misery', *lābhālābhau*, 'in profit as well as in loss', *jayājayau,* 'in victory or in defeat'. In all these various changing situations, try to keep the mind as calm as possible. *Tato yuddhāya yujyasva,* 'with such a mind enter the battlefield', as well as your life. Then you will never incur sin. *Naivam pāpam avāpsyasi,* 'you will never incur sin, if you have this attitude'. This concept of calmness of mind is a wonderful concept. Whenever you want to achieve great things, it is not through excitement that you achieve. With calm, silent, steady work, you achieve great things. In today's politics it is all excitement. You go and excite the whole people, and the excitement also dies down after some time. But those who are great workers, they are not of that nature. They have tremendous convictions, they are calm and steady, they work, they face problems, they overcome them keeping their mind calm and steady. It is the calm and steady man or woman that works best. The excited man or woman shows that he or she is working well; but, it is noise and show. Dr. Radhakrishnan said in one of his lectures, that the modern man, and the modern woman, do not believe in God; they believe in what they call 'going about doing good'. But when you watch closely, 'it is more going about than doing good'. So much of excitement, so much of noise, and so little work is turned out. We have plenty of such in our society today. But, calm, silent, steady work is real work. That is the type of work Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling now; it applies to a housewife, to an administrator; so

also, to any professional. Calm, silent, steady work. The mind's tendency is to go up and down. In fact, that is a big psychology in itself. Every experience of the external world, throws the mind into waves, just like dropping a stone in a lake making for waves coming up; the mind is like that. Some experiences make for bigger waves, and some become like Atlantic waves. That is all bad. You are thrown off your ground. You lose your mental balance thereby. Most of us have some measure of balance in the midst of day to day life except when something extraordinary happens to us. But by training we can increase our capacity to keep the mind steady, even when unsteadying influences work on it. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is introducing now, because he is now going to give you a philosophy of life and work. And life and work mean upsetting of the mind often. So, you must learn to handle the mind. You must keep it calm and steady. It is the beginning of the teaching. He will later on define His philosophy itself as *samatvam yoga ucyate, yoga* is *samatvam.* This mind is calm and steady—that is *yoga.* Normally, it is not.

Take any animal. Any impulse arising in an animal throws its mind into a convulsion. Then it must find an immediate expression in an action. Then, that impulse dies away. That is the nature of animal behaviour. But, in the case of a human being, when he or she has not started training the mind, very often this is the behaviour; when we were primitive, we were doing like this. Though even then, a certain calmness had come to the human system, because nature had provided for it, that every sensory input will be observed, then passed on as a motor output. A little gap between input and output, even the most ordinary men have.

That is the beginning of a tremendous development in our human psyche. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is just indicating the beginning of that development. Just put a little stop between input and output. Suppose, somebody abuses me; immediately I abuse back. Don't do so; that means you are an animal, an automaton, as we say. And always we say, action and reaction are equal and opposite. That is the mechanical law. But in the case of human beings, it can be altered. If the action is one unit, reaction can be ten units, or it can be no unit. That shows you are free. When life appears on the horizon of evolution, even in a very elementary form, freedom also appears. There is no other definition of freedom. You are not merely a creature of some

external circumstance. You regulate your reaction. As soon as you start regulating your reaction, you have started achieving your humanness. Then the march inward is unique. You are handling your own mind. You are creating a sense of calmness within. Great achievements will come thereby. Human evolution begins with the achievement of this balancing of the mind between a sensory input and a motor output. That must be strengthened more and more. We shall come across this subject again and again, because *the whole subject of the Gītāis the training of this human mind for total human development by handling this world around it, and by handling oneself also in a masterly way*. We don't remain a creature of some masterly process outside. We are the masterly force, handling our life. This must be achieved by every human being, and our neurology and physiology today tell us, that nature has endowed the human being with that organic capacity to handle one's life from this masterly point of view. He or she need not remain a mere creature. He or she can be free and can exercise this freedom; this is the teaching of modern biology, neurology, and the ancient Vedanta. Vedanta takes the experience of freedom to the highest level of development. It calls it *mukti.* This wonderful development of initial human freedom to insert a gap between input and output experience—that is the beginning of the human march to freedom. Out of that will come a wonderful achievement.

Towards the end of this chapter, after expounding his philosophy, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will give you, in about 18 or 19 verses, the nature of that human mind which has achieved perfect equilibrium, perfect steadiness, which the *Gītā* calls *sthitaprajñā*. It is a wonderful word. *Prajñā* means knowledge, or wisdom; *sthita* means steady. Our knowledge is not steady. It comes and goes. But, by training, we can make the mind steady, wisdom steady. Those verses are masterly verses at the end of the second chapter. First the exposition, then an illustration. That is the type of character we must develop in ourselves. So, the whole subject is meant for every citizen, every human being—man, woman and child. How to build up this human equanimity. How to handle this packet of psycho-physical energy which you have got at birth; how to develop it, expand it, bring out the best out of it. Who is to do it? Each one of us; others can help. But the actual work is your own. As the English saying tells us: 'You can take a horse to the water but cannot make it drink.' So, Vedanta repeatedly stresses this point: building up your character and your life is your own work, your own privilege. Don't leave it to others. Take help from anybody, but the work is your own. And when you develop, the world will marvel: yes, here is one who with a given capital of psychic energy, has built up a huge business of intellectual and spiritual life—just like any business man starting with a thousand rupees capital, later on becomes a millionaire, because he invested it properly and worked hard. The same thing in the case of human personality. How are we to build up, on the given capital, a big personality which is a great blessing to oneself and to the world outside? That subject will come up now and continue all through the chapters. Though this is told to Arjuna, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells it to everyone. Arjuna is only a *nimitta,* an instrument. What shall I do with my packet of psychic energy?

In industry and commerce, we are seeing a new type of entrepreneurship in India. Our people, especially in the business community, were generally lazy and cosy before. They were satisfied with money-lending. But political freedom has brought a sense of one's own importance and a new energy to work hard. So, a few months ago, the weekly *India Today,* published a big despatch: On the New Entrepreneurs in India. I found it to be an inspiring article. A man has only a thousand rupees. He invests it, works hard, builds up; and now he has become a big

industrialist. Like that, hundreds of cases; India is showing this initiative, this enterprise; no more are we given to the *kismat* idea: it is my fate to be weak like this. That philosophy is going away. The *Gītā* philosophy is coming; when these hundreds of entrepreneurs study the *Gītā*, they will develop a new type of entrepreneurship, adding to it a strong sense of national responsibility. They will consider that all this that we earn by hard work and development of national resources, I will spend for the good of all, for the good of society. That second blessing will come to those entrepreneurs when they get the *Gītā* message along with their own tremendous energy and enterprise. Enterprise is beautiful.

When I was a student at the High School, I read a small book, a statement from Macaulay, and from his own teacher, John Stuart Mill. He says: 'it is always advisable to be in the forefront of opportunity in matters of enterprise, and in the backyard of opportunity in matters of indulgence.' For pleasure, you are at the back; for enterprise you are at the front. That is the type. Just like when there is food to be cooked, I am there; it is time for eating, bell has rung, I am there. Some people come only when the bell rings. Some people are ready to do the cooking. This one is far better than that other one. In matters of enterprise, be in the forefront. In matters of indulgence, fall far behind. Tell this to your children, then we shall develop this nation to its highest level of character. At present it is not. We are teaching all our children: Be at the forefront at the time of pleasure and profit. Enterprise: if it is personal, you do; if it is for the nation, don't do anything. Keep quiet. That teaching we are giving, ruining the character of our children. So, let us take from this great book that wonderful new orientation we have given to our education, in name only, namely, human resource development, value-oriented education. The *Gītā* is full of these ideas. So, carry this message to the society, to our children, to our students everywhere.

We studied verse 38 in the second chapter. This is the dividing line between the previous verses and the verses that are yet to come. A measure of stabilization within the mind is needed for effective work. Frenzy is not a good accompaniment of efficient work. Calm, silent, steady work is what brings about permanent results. The one lesson we have to learn is that people who jump about and shout about, they are not efficient at all. Those

who work silently, they alone know how to work. In the whole teaching of the *Gītā*, this subject is uppermost: how to work? How to work efficiently? This subject immediately brings up the idea of the training of the mind. What is the state of the mind? Unless it is a little calm and quiet, great work cannot be done. Just emotional effervescence is not efficiency; it all disappears in no time. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving us an initial teaching about developing a measure of stability within the mind. We have the capacity to bring it about. We have to exercise that capacity. So, our mind is always going up and down. That mind has to be stabilized a little, an inner stabilization.

Some weeks ago, I quoted the famous French physiologist who said, *a fixed interior milieu is the condition for a free life*. It is an inner stabilization out of which will come great energy, tremendous response to the human situation. People who make noise and who shout are not efficient workers. Today, in India, there is so much of noise, so much of shouting at the time of work. That only shows we are not good workers. We are not efficient. Simply emotional excitement. The *Gītā* will teach us the distinction between noisy and showy type of work, and calm, silent, steady, and efficient work. Long ago when I was in Delhi, the autorickshaw had been just introduced at that time, a new species of vehicle. Such a noise it used to make, and I thought it must be a powerful conveyance; I got in. And it started in a shaking movement all the time making a big noise; but, I found that the speed was only twelve miles per hour! Later on, when I travelled by a first class motor car, its movement was quiet but the speed was about eighty miles per hour. I have also travelled in Europe at 106 miles per hour, with no shaking or noise. In human beings also you find this difference. When one is not efficient, he or she makes noise, shouts, and is full of frenzy. When one gets tremendous inner strength, he or she becomes calm and steady, and turns out more work than other persons. That is the one lesson we, as a people, have to learn. We can become great workers, changing the world around us in the right direction. That is called creative work. That subject is coming up in the great teachings of the second and third chapters of the *Gītā*. The third chapter is called *karma-yoga,* the great *yoga* of action. So, in this earlier chapter, the warning is given to us: try to keep the mind as calm and balanced as possible. Some great thing is

coming out of it. Not only the good work outside, but also a penetration inward, towards your own true nature; that needs that wonderful calmness and balance of mind.

Earlier, we discussed the concept of homeostasis in modern neurology, that the body has got a thermal equilibrium. Nature achieved it in the later mammals for survival. Changes in outside temperature will not affect the body temperature; it remains constant. That is called a homeostatic condition. Out of that only, nature could develop the human higher brain, whose function is to take man to freedom, to emancipation, says a neurologist, Gray Walter in his book: The *Living Brain*. For all mammals, 'homeostasis meant survival. But for man, it means emancipation'. What a wonderful idea! Nature has given us one type of homeostasis, namely, physical. The *body* has got homeostasis. The blood stream has a constancy of oxygen, of various other components. In work you disturb it, and it automatically restores itself. So also, temperature; it automatically restores itself. This automatic stabilization of the inner system is known as homeostasis. So, nature says to man, 'I have given you a physical homeostasis; you achieve a psychic homeostasis for yourself, by your own efforts, for which I am giving you this wonderful cerebral system.' That background must be kept in view when you study this verse: *Sukhaduḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau; Tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivam pāpamavāpsyasi.* Enter into work in the battle of life with this calm attitude, balanced attitude, then you will achieve great results. Now we come to the next verse 39.

एषा तेऽभिहिता सांख्ये बुद्धिर्योगे त्विमां शृणु।
बुद्ध्या युक्तो यया पार्थ कर्मबन्धं प्रहास्यसि॥३९॥

Eṣā te'bhihitā sāmkhye buddhiryoge tvimām śṛṇu;
Buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha karmabandham prahāsyasi —2. 39

'The wisdom of Self-realization has been declared unto you. Hear now the wisdom of *yoga,* endued with which, O son of Pṛthā, you shall break through the bonds of *karma.*'

He says, till now I have been conveying to you the *Sāṅkhya,* wisdom, meaning *jñāna-yoga*. This world is unreal. The Atman alone is real. In that transcendental state, you will realize this Atman. This world is a world of passing shadows. That kind of teaching was given in *jñāna-yoga.* And Śrī Kṛṣṇa was telling Arjuna to fight the war on the basis of that teaching of *jñāna-yoga.* Now He says, *eṣā te'bhihitā sāṅkhye*, 'till now I have told you about the approach of the *Sāṅkhya* line of thinking', but now you hear from Me the *yoga* way of thinking and action, the *buddhi-yoga*. I am going to speak to you the *yoga* of action, *yoga* of active endeavour, out of which also you achieve spirituality. So, He said, *buddhiryoge tvimām śṛṇu*, 'now I am going to tell you this new philosophy of yoga, how work can lead us to spiritual realization; and if you have to work, the work you do is real, people with whom you deal are real; if you think the world is unreal, there is no fun in work. In fact, we have been taught this idea of the world being unreal. And yet we have to work there. And our work will show absolute unconcern. Half-minded work. Most of our people now when they work are half-sleepy. They have no interest in the work around, except very special individual persons. But why did that attitude come? Because this 'unreal world' philosophy was spread through various channels to the people. *Sab duniyā jhūṭā hai.* There is nothing in it, you remain your own Self. That teaching was given to our people long ago through various channels. Without looking at all aspects of the teaching, we became distorted in psyche. First of all, self-centredness and unconcern for others. This kind of philosophy had gone deep into our mind with the result that our human relations became weak, unconcerned. In a great teacher, or in a great spiritual *sādhakā*, this human unconcern was not there; but to millions of people, the result was a dried-up heart. No concern for others. That attitude also came in politics. That is why this *yoga* path of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is a strong medicine for most of us. We did not understand or follow it till Vivekananda came in the modern period.

What will be the result of this *yoga buddhi?* Śrī Kṛṣṇa answers: *buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha karmabandham prahāsyasi,* if you develop this *buddhi, yoga buddhi,* one great result will be that through work you will attain that very spiritual freedom which *jñāna* gives. You can continue to work. You can handle the work situation, handle other human beings. In and

through all these you would become free from all bondage that work produces otherwise. Action produces bondage, only if you do it ignorantly. But this *yoga buddhi* will help you to perform actions, and yet not to have any bondage at all. Achieve that same spiritual freedom, which the *jñāna-yogī* gets. But, in addition, you will be a warm-hearted person, deeply interested in the people around you. You will be doing great good to the people, to the society.

This new philosophy, which Śrī Kṛṣṇa is expounding to Arjuna and to all of us, has not been expressed in our life and action all these one thousand years. But in the modern age we can do so, and we will do so. Our whole life and work system in India needs a revolutionary transformation. That comes only from hard work, work with dedication, work with a great sense of human urgency. So, that philosophy is very very important for us and for a large part of the world as well. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, *buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha karmabandham prahāsyasi,* 'endowed with this *yoga buddhi,* O Arjuna, you will destroy all bonds of action.' You are afraid of action that it may create bondage, I am assuring you, if you take to *yoga buddhi,* no bondage will come. That is the philosophy which can bless and elevate every human being. Most people cannot give up work; so most of us will be in bondage. Why should it be so? All of us can be in work, as well as kept free from bondage. That is its universal relevance. *Karmabandham, bandham,* 'bondage', arising from *karma*, 'you will destroy it', *prahāsyasi. Karma* will remain, *bandha* will go. This is a great teaching for all people. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives a beautiful characteristic of this path.

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते।
स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात्॥४०॥

Nehābhikramanāśo'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate;
Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt—2. 40

'In this, there is no waste of unfinished attempt, nor is there production of contrary results. Even a little of this *dharma* protects (one) from great fear.'

Neha abhikrama nāśo'sti, 'in this great path of *yoga buddhi,* there is no fear of any loss of unfinished attempt'. You do something. You leave it due to some circumstances. When you come next to it, you have to start *a, b, c,* once again. Many things in life belong to that category. This is specially true of all religious rituals. But in this case, there is no such trouble. So, rituals you do. You finish a ritual half; when you return to it, you cannot continue the next half. You have to start from *a, b, c,* once again. But, in this path, everything is cumulative. You do what you can, then leave it, and after some time you can come back again and continue from where you left it off. Continue further, continue further: what can be called cumulative development. In fact, that is the nature of character-building. Character development is always cumulative. You do something, you build up character; then you have other things to do, then you forget all about it, come back again, and restart it. That is the meaning of this wonderful śloka. *Neha abhikrama nāśo'sti* and *pratyavāyo na vidyate,* 'there is no evil resulting from some mistake in the action'. Then comes a tremendous assurance: *svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt,* 'even a little of this *dharma,* this philosophy, will save us from great fear'. Character development is not just a matter of one day. You go on doing it, slowly build up, build up a great character, a strong character; it takes time. And so, cumulatively you are building up a wonderful character with tremendous humanist resources. So, *nehābhikramanāśo'sti,* in all character development, 'there is no *abhikrama-nāśa*', 'waste of unfinished attempt', whatever you have done before leaving off, remains yours; you come back and start from where you left off. Just like a man building a house; it has got a hundred thousand rupees as the estimate, he has only ten thousand, so, he lays the foundation, builds up the plinth. Then the money is exhausted. Let it remain, it is good for it. It will be well stabilized. Later on, again he got ten thousand. He builds it up still further. Then further money came. In this way, in so many stages, the building becomes completed. This is what happens in all efforts at character development, and this development of character has one wonderful quality, it makes you strong, it makes you fearless, it makes you compassionate, it makes you feel one with all. Therefore, 'even a little of this *dharma* will save us from great fear', S*valpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt. Gītā's* teaching is, even a little is better than nothing; it is not 'all or nothing'. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says to

one and all: As much as you can, take from my teaching, build up your own life and character as much as you can. Don't depress yourself with the thought: 'O! That man has done so much, I don't have that strength. I shall do nothing'. That is not a correct attitude. That man has done according to *his* strength. You do according to *your* strength. Step by step, inch by inch, build up your great character and personality, by handling this psycho-physical energy system that is within you. Out of your psychic energy system, you are going to produce a remarkable product, namely, *buddhi. Buddhi yoga, yoga buddhi,* discriminative faculty, a luminous point within the human sensory and psychic system. That is to be developed out of the same psychic energy system. It is a tremendous psychic chemistry we do within the human system. We convert the whole body into a laboratory. There we are slowly evolving this *buddhi. Buddhi* is your intelligence, discriminative faculty, your will, and all emotions mixed with it in a beautiful harmony. It is the greatest instrument of human development: reason, imagination and will are integrated in it. That is what we need. And the *Gītā* is going to tell us again and again, the greatness of *buddhi.* In many places you will find it invoked in the *Gītā: buddhau śaraṇamanviccha,* 'take refuge in *buddhi*'. With that *buddhi* you will achieve everything. *Buddhi* is essentially reason, but not dry intellectual reason. Reason which has been reinforced by emotions, by feeling. All motivation comes from emotion and feeling, not from intellect. And then comes will with its power of impact. And so, when you combine all the three, you get a wonderful instrument of human development. That is called *buddhi.* A student in school and college studies various books, but the ultimate result of all study should be the evolution of that *buddhi.* Then great things will come for oneself as well as for others. A person goes to a doctor, the doctor examines and tells the patient, you must take one litre of milk every day for your health. Doctor, I don't have that much money to take one litre of milk everyday. All right, then take half a litre everyday, he will say. Then, finally, one-fourth litre; take even a little, it is good for you. That is the nature of this teaching. As much as you take, that much is good for you. If I can't take one full litre, I shall not take any milk at all—that is not correct. So, *svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt.* What is the nature of that *buddhi?* The next verse gives the answer.

व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिरेकेह कुरुनन्दन।
बहुशाखा ह्यनन्ताश्च बुद्धयोऽव्यवसायिनाम्॥४१॥

Vyavasāyātmikā buddhirekeha kurunandana;
Bahuśākhā hyanantāśca buddhayo'vyavasāyinām—2. 41

'In this, O scion of Kuru, there is but a single *buddhi* with a one-pointed determination. The purposes of the undecided are innumerable and many-branching.'

One is called *vyavasāyī,* the other is called *a-vyavasāyī*. *Vyavasāya* means endeavour, effort, tremendous determination—all that is called *vyavasāya.* The opposite is *avyavasāya.* Here, in this *buddhi-yoga* philosophy, there is a *vyavasāyātmikā buddhi,* a *buddhi* of tremendous determination. *Vayavasāya* means determination, a tremendous effort. All that is included in that. That is what you get, and that is one, not two or three, or multiple. The whole energy has been organized and unified. Look at the human body. What diversity is there in the human body! From the cell to the biggest organs of the system, everything is so diverse, and yet there is a perfect unification. Everything works for everything else. There has been differentiation and integration, as modern biology says. Evolution proceeded through differentiation and integration. Similarly, when you build up your inner life, the same thing must happen—differentiation and tremendous integration. That integration is what is mentioned here; *ekeha kurunandana*, 'the *vyavasāyātmikā buddhi*, O Arjuna, is only one in this school of *yoga* philosophy'. But, in ordinary life, *bahuśākhā hyanantāśca buddhayo'vyavasāyinām,* 'those who are *avyavasāyīs,* without that kind of determination, their minds function in a scattered way'. There is no energy developed within the system. Everything is scattered.

Mind has two states: one is a scattered state, the other is the gathered state. In all *yoga* teaching, you speak of a gathered state: gather all this energy. In normal life, the mind is scattered in a thousand ways. Therefore, it has not that energy. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling that, in this *karma yoga,* philosophy of action, we have to develop that type of *buddhi*—unified *buddhi*—it is a wonderful idea, because in the other state, *bahuśākhā hyanantāśca buddhayo'vyavasāyinām.* In the undecided type, the mind is

scattered in a thousand directions; no energy is developed out of it. This is what we have to do here. So, this verse brings before us the idea of a human being developing a unified psychic energy within oneself. It is not scattered here and there, and that mind we have to develop within ourselves. This is the basis of a healthy philosophy of life and human development. *Bahuśākhā hyanantāśca,* 'a mind that is many-branched and scattered', we see people with such minds, with scattered energies. That cannot make an impact on a life situation, because there is no unification of energy. Great minds like Gandhiji's, for example, had a tremendous unification of energy in their minds. One mind only, not two or three. And that mind works in various fields. But the mind is one only. He or she has integrated the entire psychic energy within the individual and the power of impact of such a person is tremendous. So, we also must develop that kind of a capacity that it will not be scattered in a thousand causes and each cause gets only a little psychic energy thereby. Whenever the rays are scattered, they cannot penetrate. When the rays are concentrated, then they can penetrate the body as in the x-ray, for example. Similarly, in the human mind also it is the same. In all education, whether it is institutional or non-institutional, this work of integration of psychic energy must go on. How to unify my psychic energy? How to give it the power of impact, the power of penetration—that should be our concern. Nobody else need to see it even. They will see the result of it in the wonderful way I handle the world around me. So, that is the goal of all human education. Not reading some text book and passing examinations—that is only the outside part of education. The real inner part is this development of the mind; making it of this nature.

The next three verses convey a profound message:

यामिमां पुष्पितां वाचं प्रवदन्त्यविपश्चितः।
वेदवादरताः पार्थ नान्यदस्तीति वादिनः॥४२॥

Yāmimām puṣpitām vācam pravadantyavipaścitaḥ;
Vedavādaratāḥ pārtha nānyadastītītivādinaḥ— 2. 42

'They are the unwise who utter flowery speeches, O Arjuna. They delight in the letter of the Vedas and argue that there is nothing else.'

कामात्मानः स्वर्गपरा जन्मकर्मफलप्रदाम्।
क्रियाविशेषबहुलां भोगैश्वर्यगतिं प्रति॥४३॥

Kāmātmānaḥ svargaparā janmakarmaphalapradām;
Kriyāviśeṣabahulām bhogaiśvaryagatim prati— 2. 43

'They are full of desires, consider heaven as the highest which yield the fruit of rebirth and actions, and are full of specific rites that yield enjoyment and power.'

भोगैश्वर्यप्रसक्तानां तयापहृतचेतसाम्।
व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः समाधौ न विधीयते॥४४॥

Bhogaiśvaryaprasaktānām tayāpahṛtacetasām;
Vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidhīyate— 2. 44

'Those who have given themselves to pleasures and power, whose minds have been enslaved by them, there is no chance of developing that *buddhi* or determination which leads to *samādhi.*'

Those who have a scattered mind run after all sorts of pleasures, earthly, and heavenly, and enter into all sorts of rituals and ceremonies, based upon some teachings in the Vedas regarding rituals. Those who are involved in such things, they can never develop this *vyavasāyātmikā buddhi.* In the *śloka* He says, *yāmimām puṣpitām vācam pravadantyavipaścitaḥ,* 'that type of people who are *avipaścitaḥ,* without wisdom, without understanding, they speak *puṣpitām vācam,* flowery language, in the name of religion'.

They always quote the Vedas, discuss about what the Vedas say. Here the Vedas mean the *karma-kāṇḍa,* the ritualistic section of the Vedas, which promises you heaven. Do all these sacrifices and rituals, and you will go to heaven. They are captured by that attitude. *Kāmātmānaḥ,* 'full of sensual desires', I want this, I want that. Similarly, *svargaparā*, 'devoted to going to heaven'. Many religions have this heaven-philosophy. *Janmakarmaphalapradām,* 'the result of which is birth, and rituals'. *Kriyāviśeṣabahulām bhogaiśvaryagatim prati,* 'various rituals are there, only to get sense pleasure in the end'. *Bhogaisvarya prasaktānām tayāpahṛtacetasām,* 'those whose minds are captivated by these

bhogaiśvaryas, pleasures and power'; what happens to them? *Vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidhīyate,* 'that *buddhi* which can take one to the highest spiritual realization will not come to them at all'. Their *buddhi* is always scattered in thousand streams of desires and ambitions etc. This is a strong criticism of the enormously ritualistic position of the Vedas. In the Upaniṣads also, we come across this kind of ritualism of the Vedas. Here also the same type of criticism, because it does not help to develop character and spirituality; what is needed is spiritual development and the capacity to love and serve people around you. The policy should be minimum ritual and maximum character development. None of this will come through such hedonistic philosophy of pleasure on earth as well as in heaven through a series of rituals.

Having said this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling us an assessment of the Vedas which you find only in our *Sanātana Dharma* tradition. Every tradition speaks of its own scripture in the highest language. In this *Sanātana Dharma,* however, even though we revere the Vedas, our most sacred books, we do not give it the highest status. It is always secondary. They do not contain Truth. They contain only information regarding Truth. That is how Sri Ramakrishna also has put it in our time: He says, in the Hindu *Pañcāṅgam* or almanac, it is forecast that so many inches of rain will fall this year. But, if you take the almanac and squeeze it, you won't get a drop of water. Similarly, in the Vedas so many beautiful things are said, including realizing God, the Atman, etc. But squeeze the Vedas, you won't get any such thing. Only by squeezing your own experience, will you get Truth, will you experience Truth. So, study what the Vedas say, then leave it aside, and practise and realize Truth for yourself. That attitude was developed very early in our history in our Upaniṣads. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* one of the oldest of the Upaniṣads, contains this revolutionary statement: *vedo avedo bhavati,* 'when one realizes the Truth, the Vedas cease to be of any value'. Vedas become 'no Veda' at the stage of realization. What a beautiful idea! In no other religion will you find this bold statement, go beyond the *Bible* or beyond the *Koran*, nobody will say, though their mystics have done it and sometimes have suffered punishment for it. Only in India, the stress is: use the Vedas, use the scriptures, understand what they say, and then try to realize the truth for yourself. Experience is much higher than what is

merely contained in books. Therefore, in spite of the profound respect for the Vedas, we, in India, are taught that we have to go beyond the Vedas. That is the truth that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is now going to convey to us:

त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन।
निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान्॥४५॥

Traiguṇyaviṣayā vedā nistraiguṇyo bhavārjuna;
Nirdvandvo nityasattvastho niryogakṣema ātmavān—2. 45

'The Vedas deal with the three *guṇas.* Be you free, O Arjuna, from the triad of the *guṇas,* free from the pairs of opposites, ever-balanced, free from the thought of getting and keeping, and established in the Self.'

What a revolutionary statement! *Traiguṇyaviṣayā vedā,* 'the Vedas deal with the three *guṇas'*: *sattva, rajas* and *tamas.* But, you, Arjuna, *nistraiguṇyo bhava!* 'you go beyond the three *guṇas*'. That means you go beyond the Vedas also. *Nirdvandvo,* 'beyond all dualities', like heat and cold, profit and loss, these are called duality; *nityasattvastho,* 'established for ever in the pure *sattva* nature'; *niryogakṣema,* 'without any care for your own *yoga* and *kṣema*, profit and preservation'. Go beyond all survival philosophy, and become *ātmavān,* 'ever established in the Atman'. That kind of achievement, we must get—going beyond the Vedas, beyond the scriptures, by experiencing the truth which they expound for you and me. Every spiritual teacher in India will say, take the scripture, grasp the truth given there, and then try to realize the truth given there. Don't simply hang on to the book all the time. This has been very well expressed by Vidyāraṇya, who was in the Vijayanagar empire in the 14th century, in a famous verse of his Vedantic book *Pañcadasi.* How do we handle a spiritual book? He says:

Granthamabhyasya medhāvi jñāna-vijñāna-tatparaḥ;
Palālamiva dhānyārthī tyajet grantham-aśeṣataḥ —

'Like a person who is in search of rice, he takes paddy, husks it, throws the husk away, and takes the rice to cook and eat', similarly, the *medhāvi*, 'the intelligent person', first studies the books, *grantham-abhyasya,* 'after studying all the books'; what is your aim? Your objective is not to become a

scholar. You are a *jñāna-vijñāna-tatparaḥ,* ‘desirous of achieving knowledge and realization’. If so, what will you do? After gathering whatever is contained in the books, *tyajet grantham aśeṣatah,* `you throw away all books’; they are of no further value at all. So, Sri Ramakrishna said, a person wrote a letter to his relative in the town, ‘when you come back to the village, please bring so much cloth and so much of sweets, etc.’ And he misplaced the letter; started searching the whole house for the letter. With great difficulty he rediscovered the letter. Then the letter was read: ‘Bring this, bring that, when you come to the village.’ He tore the letter away, went to the shop, and got the things that were mentioned there. What is the use of keeping the letter, or reading it again and again? The main thing is to get the things mentioned there. So, similarly, whatever is contained in the sacred books are to be realized. Then the books are of no further value. Then, *tyajet grantham aśeṣataḥ,* throw away all dependence on books, that has been the attitude in India.

All mystics in all religions have done the same. When they directly experienced the truth, what need can they have for books? When you take to religion as an experiment, you don’t need the book. So, in the sixth chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say, *jijñāsurapi yogasya śabda-brahma-ativartate,* ‘even when you become an enquirer into the nature of spiritual life, you go beyond the purview of sacred books.’ You don’t need them further. Only to understand the problem, you need books. Now you are an experimenter, not merely a student of books. So, when you become an experimenter, the control of books on you will become reduced more and more. So, *nirdvandvo nityasattvastho niryogakṣema ātmavān,* ‘free from the dualities of life, completely Self-possessed (poised), you become without any anxiety or worry; you are established in the strength of the Atman within you.’ This is what we have to achieve. Books are secondary, realization is primary. This is what Jesus also said (*New Testament*): ‘The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life.’ This search for the essential and casting away the non-essential is a hoary tradition in Islamic spirituality also, except when the priests dominate. Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi of Persia, in his famous book *Masnavi* which is accepted in the Muslim world generally as next only to *Koran* in holiness says:

Man ze Qurān maghz rā bardāstam;

Ustukhān pese sagāṅ andakḥtam —

'The marrow from the *Koran* have I drawn, and the dry bones unto the dogs have cast,'

That is the constant emphasis in our *Sanātana Dharma* tradition. *Sādhanā* and *anubhava,* 'spiritual practice and realization'—scholarship has no meaning at all. It is only an initial help, nothing more than that. So, when you achieve that state, what type of achievement is it? A very profound verse comes here in this particular context:

यावानर्थ उदपाने सर्वत: संप्लुतोदके।
तावान्सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानत:॥४६॥

Yāvānartha udapāne sarvataḥ samplutodake;
Tāvānsarveṣu vedeṣu brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ— 2. 46

'To the spiritual person who has known the Self, all the Vedas are of so much use as a reservoir is, when there is a flood everywhere.'

That person, that spiritual seeker, who has realized the truth, what do these Vedas mean to him? Then He gives the example: Here is a huge reservoir, with water up to the brim. *Yāvānartha udapāne sarvataḥ samplutodake,* 'everywhere, water, water, up to the very brim in a lake'. You are sitting near by. Now, are you going to dig a well for a little water? Just stretch your hand, so much of water is around you. Similarly, when a person has realized the Atman, the Vedas become of just that much help to him, as much as a well, for a person sitting beside a big lake. That is the example given. *Tāvān sarveṣu vedeṣu brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ*, 'a person who knows this truth, a spiritual seeker, he or she will deal with the Vedas from that point of view'. Just like there is no need to dig a little well for water, when there is a flood of water all around you! You can just stretch the hand and get it. So, this is how an example is given by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in this context, that the effort towards spiritual realization takes you more and more beyond the control of books; books are good to begin with only. Mere scholarship is not the goal of religion; it is spirituality. Sri Ramakrishna always said: scholars without that spiritual inclination and practice behave like vultures, soaring high up in the sky but their attention is always on the

dead bodies on the earth. That is the nature of *mere* scholarship. Without discrimination, without spiritual urge within, mere scholarship is never rated high in our tradition. Similarly, in the next verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa expounds a beautiful idea, considered to be central to this teaching of *yoga-buddhi,* philosophy of *yoga.*

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥४७॥

Karmaṇyevādhikāraste mā phaleṣu kadācana;
Mā karmaphalaheturbhūḥ mā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi—2. 47

'Your right is to work only; but never to the fruits thereof. May you not be motivated by the fruits of actions; nor let your attachment be towards inaction.'

'To work alone you have the right', *karmaṇyeva adhikāraste. Mā phaleṣu kadācana,* 'not to the fruits of work'. But, if we don't get *phala*, or fruit of action, we may ask, why should we work at all? If you say so, 'no, continue to work', says the *Gītā*. *Mā karmaphalaheturbhūḥ*, 'don't work always looking at the fruit that is going to come out of it', and in the end, the *Gītā* says, *mā te saṅgo'stu akarmaṇi,* 'don't be attached to inaction'. This is a verse combining four propositions. First, you have the right to work only; not to the fruits; let not the fruits be your motive for work; and don't remain inactive. This is a very important verse, which can also create a lot of misunderstanding in people. How can we work without looking for fruits? We ask that question. It is a profound statement here. I have seen students sometimes, when they hear this kind of *śloka,* they see only the surface statement that is there. So, when gardening work was going on—I was the warden of the hostel—and the students were all working in the garden producing flowers and fruits. Someone said, to work we have the right, the fruits will go to the Swamiji! Making fun, they said like that. One day I gave them a talk about the meaning of the verse. Some deeper meaning they found. So, all of us need a little exposition of this verse, which is considered to be central to the teaching of the *Gītā*. Mahatma Gandhi wrote his book *Anāsakti-yoga,* 'Yoga of non-attachment'—non-attachment to the fruits of work. That is the meaning of *anāsakti*. *āsakti*

means attachment; *anāsakti,* non-attachment. So, when you ask this question, what is the nature of my work? And the fruits coming out of the work, to whom do they belong? You find new light coming on this particular verse.

I am not alone in this world. Whatever work I do, I take the fruit of it and forget everything else. That cannot be done. We belong to a world. There are other people also there, we have to share whatever we have with everybody else. So, a little attitude of detachment is needed from our usual attitude that this is *my* work and everything belongs to *me.* That attitude has to go. The vast world is around us. We cannot do without it. We cannot become human without a human world around us. How much we owe to the world of other human beings around us! If you cut yourself away from society, you become a nobody. Therefore, this idea of work, which keeps in front of us this idea of social welfare, human development—I am only one beneficiary of the fruit of work that comes out of my efforts, other beneficiaries must also be considered. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna: the *kācā* or unripe 'I' must develop into the *pākā* or ripe 'I'. So, detachment from what? From the ego, the little self that is centred in our genetic system. Until this little 'I' is overcome and a larger 'I' manifests in us, we remain a stunted individual. Until we learn to say *you,* we have not developed at all. We remain an unripened ego; when this little 'I' expands, it becomes the ripe ego which alone can experience its oneness with everybody else. Then I will never say everything belongs to me only. We will learn to say *we* in place of *I.* That is a tremendous development, the first stage of spiritual growth.

So, today we shall study this datum of the ego within man. It is a remarkable datum which has been thrown up in evolution only at the stage of man. In animals there is no ego. A chimpanzee has no ego. No other being in the world other than this human being has the ego. If any animal had developed this ego, we would not have been here; it would have dominated the world. This ego is a wonderful new datum. Modern physical science did not worry about this subject till now. It was concerned about the world outside, it probed into it, tried to get the energy hidden there, to make for a better civilization. That is all their developed thinking. Now, as thought has advanced, the centre of study has become the human being, and

that profound datum, the ego, or the 'I'. What does it mean? It was not there in any animal, it is not there even in a new-born baby. After about two to two-and-a-half years, you find the child says, 'I', 'I want this, I want that.' Till then it will say, 'This wants it. This wants that.' But a time comes, a little manifestation of this 'I' appears in the child. A profound new datum; that is being realized today by neurology in the West, as we, in India, had realized its profound significance long ago in Vedanta. Vedanta treats it as an initial datum; it is not in its final state; only a small sprout has come; there is plenty of spiritual development ahead. That constitutes the whole subject of the development of *ātmajñāna,* and all the teaching of practical Vedanta of the *Gītā* coming out of it. Therefore, this subject has to be treated as a profound theme, and I am glad to find that for the last 50 to 70 years, the West has been turning its attention to this wonderful subject of the ego and its possibilities. This subject finds an exposition as a feeble echo of Vedanta in a book called *The Science of Life* written in the 1920s by H.G. Wells, G.P. Wells and Julian Huxley. You find therein a wonderful passage dealing with the status of the ego in evolution (pp. 875–79):

'Alone, in the silence of the night, and on a score of thoughtful occasions, we have demanded, can this self, so vividly central to my universe, so greedily possessive of the world, ever cease to be? Without it surely there is no world at all. And yet this conscious self dies by night when we sleep, and we cannot trace the stages by which in its stages it crept to an awareness of its own existence. Personality (centred in the ego) may be only one of nature's methods, a convenient provisional delusion of considerable strategic value.

'The more intelligent and comprehensive man's picture of the universe has become, the more intolerable has become his concentration upon the individual life with its inevitable final rejection. …

'He escapes from his ego by this merger (identification with and participation in a greater being) and acquires an impersonal immortality in the association, his identity dissolving into a greater identity. This is the essence of much religious mysticism, and it is remarkable how closely the biological analysis of individuality brings us to the mystics. The individual, according to this second line of thought, saves himself by losing himself.

But in mystical teaching he loses himself in the deity, and in the scientific interpretation of life, he forgets himself as Tom, Dick and Harry and discovers himself as man. … The Western mystic and Eastern sage find a strong effect of endorsement in modern science and the everyday teaching of practical morality; both teach that self must be subordinated, that self is a method and not an end.'

Ego 'has a strategic value in evolution. It is a provisional delusion', don't treat it as a final stage. You have to discover its higher dimensions. That is the work the Upaniṣads did ages ago. How to make it grow into its own true dimension? That approach has to be kept in view when we handle this great *śloka:*

Karmaṇyevādhikāraste mā phaleṣu kadācana;
Mā karmaphalaheturbhūḥ mā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi —

If I am satisfied to stay at the level of this little ego, which has just sprouted in me, and I do not at all care to rise to its higher dimensions, then this *śloka* has no meaning to me, but if I want to experience the further reaches of this initial datum, then this *śloka* will be the opening of the gate to the higher dimensions of the human being. And so, we have to ask this question: What is this ego that appears in me? I possess the world through this ego; through it, I am the centre of the world. That is what we all feel, even a child. When the ego develops in it, the child becomes the centre of the world. All others are dancing around the child. But very soon, the child has to change that attitude and find a place for others also. That ego has to expand, has to grow, has to achieve *ātma-vikāsa.* The whole philosophy of this initial datum of the ego, now under the control of the genetic system, has to grow into its infinite dimension; this is the message of Vedanta.

About the relationship of Vivekananda's Vedanta and modern physical science, Romain Rolland says in his *Life of Vivekananda* (15th impression, 1997, pp. 262–63):

'But it is a matter of indifference to the calm pride of him (Vivekananda) who deems himself the stronger whether science accepts free religion in Vivekananda's sense of the term or not, for his religion

accepts science. It is vast enough to find a place at its table for all loyal seekers after truth.'

In no other part of the world has this subject been so thoroughly investigated and expounded, and we are glad to find that some neurologists and physicists today are handling this subject almost on identical lines, and slowly going closer and closer to what ancient Vedanta had said about it. A child will say, on seeing a rock jutting out of the ocean, that a little rock is there; but its father will tell that it is an immense rock; much of it is under water, and only a little is seen above the water level. Similarly, to the sensory vision of man, the ego is a tiny entity, but if you know its depth, it will reveal its infinite dimension. That is the teaching the Upaniṣads give. In that light only, you can understand this verse and many other verses coming hereafter.

We have the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* teaching, *tat tvam asi,* 'you are That,' you are not this tiny ego. You are not this little self which you consider yourself to be. You are that infinite Consciousness, the Atman. This *tattvamasi* is a profound teaching of the Upaniṣads, which has been and is still attracting the minds of some biologists and nuclear physicists in the Western world like Erwin Schrodinger and J.B.S. Haldane. So, when one keeps in view this background and then studies this verse, a new meaning comes. You don't want to be a child, you want to grow. This ego is like a child; why should it remain always like a child? Some of the egoist's language is like the child's language. You can find it in every society, many big people also talk 'I', 'I', 'I' all the time. They do not understand the higher dimensions of their own self. They know it only as a tiny initial datum. And it creates great tension, great suffering, for oneself as well as for others. So, there is need for probing into the infinite dimension of the ego that appears to us at the age of about 2½ onwards. That is the subject of *ātma-jñāna, adhyātma-vidyā,* based on which Śrī Kṛṣṇa is expounding a philosophy of life and action for every human being. The whole *Gītā* is dealing with men and women at work, unlike in other spiritual books, which treat of man or woman centred in prayer, meditation, worship, or some ritual or ceremony. But in this great book, the central theme is developed as to how a man or woman at any kind of work can achieve spiritual development and fulfilment, and they form the majority of people

in the world. Every person will question, if I do not get the fruits of work, what is the use of work? It is good to ask that question and try to find an answer.

Towards the end of the book, *The Science of Life,* there is a section dealing with the philosophical implications of modern biology. I quoted from that section dealing with the unreality of the ego. Remember those words: this ego in man, that is called the self, *may be one of nature's devices,* 'a convenient provisional delusion of considerable strategic value (in evolution)'. In the whole cosmos you don't find the ego. In the whole animal kingdom you don't find the ego, only in man you find it. In our ignorance we are basing our work on this provisional delusion of the ego. What a powerful 'I' is the ego in the waking state; and when we go to sleep there is no ego; it dies and later comes to an awareness of itself. Sri Ramakrishna says in one of his beautiful sayings: even the most powerful person, when he or she goes to sleep, if a child spits on his or her face, there will be no protest! And then the authors say that this is similar to what you speak of in science as detachment, objectivity. Suppose you want to know the truth of a thing, you have to remove this ego from the investigation. Ego will always wrongly judge the thing. You must detach yourself from it. Then only scientific, i.e., objective, judgement is possible. A judge in the court must banish his or her ego for the time being, to be correct in the judgement. So, on any number of occasions in life, we are asked to set aside this ego, because it is unreal, because that is not our true nature or status. But you can go beyond and penetrate to the root of this ego. That is the infinite Self. That Atman is one with all. The true Self in us is one with all. You and I are one. When Jesus was asked, What is the teaching in the commandment? He said two things: 'Thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind'. That is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto the first, and what is that? 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'. On these two hang all the laws and all the prophets. This is a beautiful summary of the spiritual and ethical dimensions of human life. Paul Deussen, a German philosopher and a scholar in Vedanta, speaking in Bombay in 1892 after his tour in India, said: Here is a great statement: love thy neighbour as thyself. But why, if you ask, the Bible has not given the answer. The answer is in the Upaniṣads.

You *are* your neighbour. You are one. There is only one infinite Self, pulsing in me, in you, in all in this world.

And so, from this genetically limited ego, which considers this whole world as planets moving around the sun, which is itself, we shall have to advance and realize our true dimension. If you want to do so, then this detachment is absolutely essential. Detach from the ego; that is why this whole book is a teaching of detachment. It is a negative concept but with a positive content: by detaching from something lower, you are manifesting something higher. Mahatma Gandhiji's book on the *Gītā* is called *Anāsakti-yoga,* '*yoga* of non-attachment', non-attachment to this tiny ego centred in this organic system. This is not true actually in life; even in families, a man or woman works, for whom? For wife, husband or children, for their welfare, not for one's own. In every department of life we find that people are concerned with the society in which they live. We owe a debt to it. Everything is not our own. There is a social context of human behaviour. That is why we pay taxes. We live in an ordered society, because there is a government; it rightfully takes taxes from us, and we pay. Similarly, many other obligations also are there. When we understand this truth, we expand our concept of self. And that is the first thing we have to do. The self that is contained in the organic system is only a 'convenient provisional delusion'. When you set it aside, you begin to expand your concept of self. You feel spiritual oneness with others. So, whatever work I do, the fruits of it are not for me alone; it will go to all. And a state will come, when there will be nothing of 'I' left; everything will be 'we'. We lose ourselves in the universal. And then, the authors say, this is what mystical teachings have taught us all the time. The little self must be transcended; it is only a means, not an end. Similarly, modern biology teaches us, you forget yourself as Tom, Dick and Harry, and realize yourself as man, that is your real identity, spiritually one with all the other human beings.

Now, this is the correlation between the ancient spiritual current and the modern scientific current—when you penetrate deeper into reality. In this light you can understand a little more this enigmatic proposition—the four-member proposition: to work you have the right; not to the fruits thereof; don't be running after the fruits; and, don't remain inactive. This tendency of claiming exclusive fruits of all work to oneself, and remain inactive

otherwise, has become maximum in India. In spite of all the religiosity we have, we are utter failures in the social context. Public property is nobody's property. Public tap is nobody's tap. We are only concerned with our own taps. We allow water to flow and be wasted from the public tap in the street; we don't mind since it is not mine. This kind of littleness of self has overwhelmed and weakened our nation. A little of this *Gītā* teaching will do immense good to our nation—that there is a society around you, that its welfare is also your concern. Even to become a citizen of a free democratic nation, we must go beyond this little self. It is not enough that you live in India, but also that you are *of India* and *for India*. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will be telling us in the third chapter (3. 13): 'he or she who cooks only for oneself, eats only so much of sin,'—*bhuñjate te tvagham pāpā ye pacanti ātmakāraṇāt.* All those who cook and eat only for themselves, never thinking of others, they eat only so much of sin.

This little self is only a delusion, said Buddha. There is no separate self. Belief in a separate self, in a separate individuality, is the centre of all evil. All selfishness and corruption, all violence, all exploitation come from that limited attitude. Therefore, when I realize my belongingness to a society, I can't attribute the results of all my actions to myself. The word 'self' becomes wider, wider, wider. That is the criterion of human development. A little baby wants everybody else to look to it as the centre. If he or she says something, you must do that something, because *he* or *she* is the centre. It is harmless for a baby, but not for a grown-up person. We have to respect other people, respond to other people, work for them, help them. There is so much need of intercommunication in a society. All this is based upon this one single teaching of the second chapter: Do work, but don't appropriate the results to yourself. There is a higher point of view from which you can do your work. That higher point of view *must* come to us today. In fact, as I said several times, co-operative societies, state and union governments, will become a great success in India the day we understand this *Gītā* teaching. What is not physically mine, but belongs to all, I must take more care of that. That one lesson can change our social situation. But what obtains now is just the opposite. Because it doesn't belong to me, it doesn't concern me, I am not interested in it. So, public sector of all types will be a failure, will not produce the expected results, so long as this character is not there. But

when we learn this lesson, we shall see tremendous developments in all aspects of our national life. No private sector can compare with such a public sector. In India the whole thing is opposite. In any country you go, government schools are the most efficient; in India, it is just the opposite. Private schools are always efficient, government schools are always bad. Why? Nobody cares.

Therefore, this petty selfish attitude to work has ruined the whole nation and retarded our post-independence progress. The English saying is perfectly correct with respect to our history. 'I and mine, and the devil take the hindmost.' And we invited the devil, the devils invaded our nation, and we are seeing now the devil's play in India in the form of exploitation, suffering, corruption from top to bottom, and violence. We want to overcome that situation. So here comes a profound message. The more people go into it, the more they will get meaning out of it. The next *śloka* gives us the positive aspect of this subject of work. If you ask me not to run after the fruits of action, that is merely negative. What shall be the attitude of my mind at the time of my action? That is the theme of the next verse.

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय।
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते॥४८॥

Yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā dhanañjaya;
Sidhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvam yoga ucyate—2. 48

'Being steadfast in *yoga,* O Arjuna, perform actions, abandoning attachment, remaining unconcerned as regards success and failure. This evenness of mind is known as *yoga.*'

Here that word *yoga* comes once again. What is *yoga? Samatvam* is *yoga.* 'Equanimity, mind in perfect balance, that is called *yoga.*' But then what point of view shall I adopt during work and human relation? *Yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi,* 'do actions established in *yoga*'. That *buddhi-yoga,* that came earlier, is the attitude from which you can work and achieve most effective results. *Saṅgam tyaktvā,* 'giving up attachment', that comes from this truncated self. All attachments come from that little man. That attachment has to go; but how does it go? When you deny this little 'I', the

large ‘I’ begins to manifest. In Sri Ramakrishna’s words, when the unripe ‘I’ goes, the ripe ‘I’ will manifest. Therefore, *Sidhyasidhyoḥ samo bhūtvā,* ‘becoming even-minded in *siddhi* and in *asiddhi,* success and failure’. Too much depression in failure, too much elation in success, is not proper. Therefore, ‘try to keep the mind even’, *samo bhūtvā.*

In the *Mahābhārata,* there is the story of a young prince by name Sañjaya (not of the *Gītā* but of the northern Sind region) getting defeated in a battle and becoming very depressed and inactive. If he had succeeded, he would have been very proud. His mother, Vidula, was a heroic woman. That mother told her son, ‘don’t remain depressed like this. Be manly, be strong. Failures come, successes come; you should not be much affected by them. They are like waves in the sea. You must be above them.’ And then comes a famous exhortation of Vidula compressed in a small number of words: *muhūrtam jvalito śreyo na tu dhūmāyitam ciram,* ‘it is better you flame forth for one instant than smoke away for ages’! What a tremendous message for every human being! *G*o on smoking for ages, what fun is there? Flame forth for one instant, instead of smoking away for ages! As the English Poet, Ben Johnson, expresses it: ‘In small proportions do we but beauty see, in short measures life may perfect be.’ A Śaṅkarācārya who lived only for 32 years, lived a most intense life affecting the thought of a vast country like India. So, in this way, a very purposeful, heroic philosophy of life will contain all these positive elements. All those petty attitudes of ‘I’ and ‘mine’, ‘I don’t care for others’, will have no place in such a philosophy.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi,* ‘do actions from the *yoga* level of consciousness’. That is a big subject and it constitutes a complete and comprehensive philosophy of life. In the West today, this is a very very attractive theme. How to raise our consciousness levels? After all, all actions come from a particular level of consciousness. If it comes from another level, the action will also be different in effect. A criminal has one action. His consciousness level is in a particular state. A very generous man also does action. His action comes from another consciousness level. And so, this subject of raising consciousness levels, *bodha unnamana*, is an attractive subject in all countries today. If an officer or a clerk in the Government Secretariat is unconcerned with the people, his or her activity

comes from a low level of that little self, controlled by the genetic system. The genes are selfish, says modern biology; they cannot be the source of values. Another clerk or officer, interested in the welfare of the people will respond with an attitude of 'what can I do for you? How can I help you?' This response comes from another consciousness level, above the genetic system. That consciousness level from which positive actions come, positive good to society comes, is called the *yoga* level, or from the *yoga-buddhi* level. So, *yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi,* 'do work from that vantage ground of *yoga*'. Then comes one of the two definitions of *yoga: samatvam yoga ucyate,* '*yoga* is equanimity, balance'. Every experience throws the mind into a wave, small wave, big wave. You have the power to control that wave-formation. If you exercise that power, you are a free person, you are really using your higher cerebral system. If you don't, you become like a creature of circumstances. Somebody says, 'you weep', and you weep. Somebody says, 'you smile', and you smile. You have no freedom. That should not be. I shall smile when I want to, not because somebody dictates to me or nature dictates to me. That is called freedom. *The whole of the Gītāteaching is based upon the truth of human freedom*. From freedom we come, in freedom we live, and to freedom we return. That is the Vedantic teaching, said Swami Vivekananda. And so here, the capacity to keep the mind in balance when so many circumstances come to unbalance it, that is the real test of human greatness, human strength. So many examples are available in this connection. From the highest level of a Buddha up to the ordinary levels of greatness in a society, we find many types of this achievement. But every step you take in that direction, to show that you are free from external constraints, is progress, real human progress. That is to be emphasized again and again.

Earlier, I had referred to modern neurology telling us about the achievement of thermostatic equilibrium within the body, from later mammals to human beings, and other similar equilibria within the human system, like the constitution of the blood, etc. Everything is in balance. When it is upset by work, it automatically restores itself to balance. That is called the homeostatic condition of the human body. That is a wonderful achievement, not by you and me, but by nature. And on this subject, Claude Bernard, the famous French physiologist, had said, and I had quoted it

earlier: ‘a fixed interior milieu is the condition for the free life’. If you want to truly achieve freedom, you must try to establish a fixed interior milieu, not a milieu which is being made to move up and down by external forces. So, to that extent you are progressing towards your life’s perfection. So, a fixed interior milieu we have to establish. This is a very difficult subject and so, I quote Gray Walter of England who discusses this subject in a very fascinating passage by quoting the words of his teacher, Sir Joseph Barcroft, in Cambridge (*The Living Brain* p. 17):

‘How often have I watched the ripples on the surface of a still lake made by a passing boat, noted their regularity and admired the patterns formed when two such ripple systems meet. … but the lake must be perfectly calm. … To look for high intellectual development in a milieu whose properties have not become stabilized is to seek … ripple patterns on the surface of the stormy Atlantic.’

Similarly, to expect high intellectual development in a mind which has not achieved a measure of inner stability is simply impossible. So, all intellectual growth, creative growth, and spiritual growth, need this prior stabilization of the human psychic system. *Samatvam yoga ucyate.* ‘That is *yoga* which is based on *samatva,* calmness, balance’; everything tries to imbalance me, I must develop a system in me which balances it automatically, as the body does it. So, physical homeostasis, which nature has given to you, must be complemented by a psychic homeostasis gained for yourself by your own efforts. This inner homeostasis is what is meant by the two great words of our spiritual tradition, namely, *śama* and *dama. Śama* is the discipline of the mind. *Dama* is the discipline of the senses. When *śama* and *dama* operate in me, then this *samatva* becomes well established. *Śama* and *dama* are highly significant words in our spiritual tradition; *dama* is this riotous sensory system getting controlled and calmed. And *śama* is this mind which also is riotous because it is tied to this sensory system, getting calmed. This calmness, *samatvam,* becomes a natural state by constant practice of these two virtues. This is *yoga* in its early stages. There is nothing particularly impossible, nothing magical, nothing mystical about it; any human being can do it, can achieve it, here and now, in the context of daily life and work. It is not exclusively an ascetic’s privilege but every one’s. And one great lesson, Vivekananda stresses again and again:

that it is the calm steady person that turns out the largest quantum of work, not the excited unsteady type of people. They may make noise, but their work will be very poor. This is what everyone has to learn.

This is the great teaching Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving us. Do work, but the consciousness level from which your work proceeds must be of that nature; stable and steady; that is called *buddhi-yoga,* or *yoga-buddhi, buddhi* established in *yoga.* That state is the best source from which all actions can come. They will always be good, good for oneself and good for all, and, therefore, these two virtues, *śama, dama*, are highly praised in our literature. Great workers, great world-movers, unless they had that *samatvam* within, could not have summoned that tremendous energy to make the world move in that particular direction. And so, for all of us, as much as we can, even one step ahead is good for us, for making our life efficient; and this *yoga* is going to be defined later on in a verse as 'efficiency in life and work'. So, there is nothing magical in it. People must banish all idea of magic and miracle from this philosophy of *yoga*. This is down to earth. Take a person by the hand, slowly lift him or her up, and take him or her to the highest level of life. That is what this philosophy does. Everything is clear, everything can be communicated. It can be practised; it is difficult, all great things are difficult, even climbing a small hill is difficult. But, the more a great achievement is difficult, the more will be the challenge to the human mind. 'I don't want an easy life', that attitude must come. Then only you can have a society of heroic minds. No easy life, 'I am prepared to pay the price and get it', no charity; that is a wonderful idea.

In India, the Sikh gurus, from Guru Nanak to Guru Govind Singh, were the people who taught this wonderful idea of self-reliance. Don't seek for easy life, work hard, don't beg. Work and earn. Nowhere in India will you find the command of that great teaching in the life of the people as you find in Punjab from these gurus. Even at the most difficult times of India's political partition, refugees were coming from Pakistan Punjab to Indian Punjab and Delhi, with absolutely empty pockets, and yet none of them begged; they only asked for work. There you can see the tremendous energy coming out of this little discipline which the gurus gave. So, the whole nation stands to gain by applying to one's life even a little of this *Gītā*

teaching. And this *Gītā* will in due course inspire thousands of people in all parts of the world.

Only today, I was reading our famous Professor Fritjof Capra of Berkeley University, author of that famous book *Tao of Physics,* telling a reviewer,

'I first got interest in eastern thought by studying the *Bhagavat Gītā*. That put me on in this direction.'

So many are reading this great Song Celestial all over the world so that, after some decades, the effect of all this study and teaching and practice will be found in the emergence of a better humanity, more pure, more compassionate, more intelligent, more efficient. The *yoga* of the *Gītā* sponsors all these virtues and graces in people in all parts of the world. And so, in this verse 48, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells all humanity through Arjuna: *yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi,* and *samatvam yoga ucyate.* Even at the age of four and five, a child must be taught a little *samatva.* Children are generally excitable, and it is not bad at their age, but they must be slowly initiated into this: 'now, try to calm your mind; don't be excited all the time.' That means, the child is being taught to handle its own mind, and not to continue to be a plaything of the external world. That is the meaning of *śama* and *dama.* From the world outside, somebody says to you that you are a fool, and you become wretched and depressed; that man, who called you a fool, is dead and gone, but you are living a depressed life because somebody said you were a fool. That is what an American writer said: to put your mind in somebody else's pocket is the most unfortunate thing you can do. And so, learn to put it in your own pocket. 'I shall determine how I react to any situation'; that can come only when the mind has that balance. Sir Joseph Barcroft said, if the lake is calm—the lake of the mind—then it will form wonderful ripple patterns in the inner life of human beings; even so, spiritual development cannot be formed in a milieu which has not been calmed and made even. That is why if you want to become great as *a person,* you have to achieve all this by handling your mind.

The first thing you have to do is to handle your mind. We rarely handle our minds. We handle tools, but the biggest tool is the mind itself; we never handle it. We let it go in its own way. So, the *Gītā* is going to give us that

other teaching. Handle the tools, but handle the mind also. The tool of all tools is the mind. Then something great will happen to you. So, this is the first definition of *yoga: samatvam yoga ucyate.* And two ślokas later, you will find again in verse 50 another definition which is much more pervasive in meaning and significance. The next verse, verse 49, says:

दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय।
बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणा: फलहेतव:॥४९॥

Dūreṇa hyavaram karma buddhiyogāddhanañjaya;
Buddhau śaraṇamanviccha kṛpaṇāḥ phalahetavaḥ—2. 49

'Work (with desire) is verily far inferior to that performed with the mind established in *buddhi-yoga.* O Dhanañjaya, seek refuge in this *buddhi*, evenness of mind; wretched are they who act for (selfish) results.'

These few verses in the heart of the second chapter of the *Gītā* are masterly, conveying a profound philosophy of life for all humanity, and particularly verse 49, which I read out just now, *dūreṇa hyavaram karma buddhiyogāt dhanañjaya,* 'Arjuna, work done with a selfish motive is far inferior to work done from that *buddhi-yoga* point of view'. *Buddhau śaraṇam anviccha,* 'take refuge in *buddhi*'. Develop *buddhi* in yourself. *Kṛpaṇāḥ phalahetavaḥ,* 'those who run after fruits, they are very small-minded', *kṛpaṇāḥ—kañjūs,* as we say in Hindi. They are small-minded. Now, this verse was quoted in a public lecture by the Secretary-General at the United Nations a few years ago. In quoting this verse he said, if people can follow in their life this teaching, the world will be a better place to live in. *Buddhi* is a great word in Vedanta, coming again and again in the *Gītā*. Actually, it is the faculty of reason, judgement, discrimination. It represents the integration of the intellect, emotion and will. It controls, or ought to control, all the psychic and sensory processes in a human being. This cerebral system is the organic instrument of that *buddhi.* The cerebral system is the latest development of the brain in human beings. That is meant to control and regulate the entire human organism other than the organism's automatic functions. By understanding this, and trying to practise this a little, anybody can develop this *buddhi* within oneself as an instrument of achieving the goal of evolution at the human stage. It is

manufactured out of the psycho-physical energy system within everybody. We only purify that energy, refine it; then it becomes *buddhi.*

I often refer to this subject of refining psychic energy. All high character is based upon the refining of psychic energies. Raw psychic energy gives you crude character. This is a very important subject. We have refineries in India now, we take crude oil and refine that oil, and out of that refinery we get beautiful petroleum products. Even fine scents you get out of it. Refining is essential so far as crude oil is concerned. Similarly, nature has given to man a wonderful refinery of experience within this human system. Take crude experience, refine it, and then, send out beautiful products of character—love, compassion, peace, efficiency of work, dedication—out of the crude energy that you get in yourself. This is a subject which every youth must think about and work out in life. How to refine my experience? Today, in the concept and practice of education all over the world, there is very little of this refining of experience. The crudity that has come to our life is appalling. Crudity in ordinary human relations, crudity in politics, crudity everywhere; education is there, but not refinement; psychic energy is there, but no refining; that crudity is a sign that we have not used our body-mind complex as a refinery of experience. All these ideas pertain to the teaching that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving us in this second chapter. Where there is no *buddhi,* we live and work from a lower level of life. Then we become a *phalahetavaḥ*—'motivated by fruits for oneself'. There is no place for 'you' or 'we' at all in our thinking then. Compared to that, all thought and action proceeding from the level of *buddhi* will seek the welfare of others along with that of oneself; 'what can I do for you'—that attitude will be always there. That is called *buddhi-yoga* or *yoga-buddhi*, the only source of high character-energy. That *buddhi* in you is nearest to the Atman or Brahman, the one Divine Self in all. ādi Śaṅkarācārya calls it *nediṣṭham brahma,* 'nearest to Brahman'. *Buddhi* has only to turn back, the Atman is there, the infinite one.

When we study the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* we come across a beautiful chariot imagery. Human life is a journey to fulfilment. There are two types of journey: external journey, for which the body is the chariot, sense organs are the horses, mind is the reins, and *buddhi* is the charioteer. Within the chariot is the Self, the master of the chariot. In the context of that very

journey, there is also an inward journey. That inward journey is what makes for character, makes for high spiritual and character attainments. This beautiful chariot imagery is given in the third chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (I. iii. 3–9). In that chariot imagery, the driver of that chariot is *buddhi.* It directs the whole movement of the sense organs or horses of the chariot; all energy of movement is in the horses. And the horses need to be controlled by the reins; and the reins must be held by somebody; that somebody is *buddhi.* And the reins stand for the *manas*, this psychic system. So, *buddhi* is the controller and director of the whole journey. It sets the pace of the journey. It, and not the horses, can see *far* ahead, what they call in English, far-sight and foresight. The sensory system has no far-sight and foresight. Psychic system has a little far-sight, better than the sensory system. But when you come to *buddhi,* you get high foresight and far-sight, *dūradṛṣṭi.* That is called wisdom. Buddhi is a unique instrument for directing human life and for achieving human destiny. So, here Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling: *buddhau śaraṇam anviccha,* 'take refuge in *buddhi*'; don't allow your journey to be redirected by the chariot or the horses, or the reins. Similarly, in the human system, let not the body decide your life's purpose. Let not the sensory system decide it, not even the psyche, but let the *buddhi* decide the course of our life's journey. The mind is stingy, that is the meaning of *kṛpaṇaḥ.* Here it means you are petty, small, nothing big will come out of you. So, verse 49 conveys a beautiful idea of work and life, of every human being—no distinction of race, caste, nation, sect, or creed; just a human being, young or old. How shall they live and work? That is being answered much more definitely by the next verse, where *yoga* is defined by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a more concrete and comprehensive form. It is a very important verse, the very heart of the *yoga* teaching, the finest and shortest definition of *yoga.*

The whole of Vedanta can be described by one phrase coined by Sir Julian Huxley. He wants modern science to develop into 'a science of human possibilities' from what it is now; namely, a science of physical nature's possibilities. Tremendous possibilities are there hidden in every one of us. Why should I remain weak and helpless all the time? Parallel development must take place in the body, mind and spiritual fields of life. These ideas are conveyed through these verses in the second chapter. And

the whole thing is set in the context of a person at work, not at prayer, meditation, or mystical absorption. The majority of people are working people. As a working person, how can I utilize that work situation to expand my mind and heart and to manifest the tremendous possibilities lying within. That is real education for a human being, and so, in the next verse, verse 50, we have the keynote statement of the *Gītā* teaching given in the briefest possible language. In fact, the whole philosophy of the *Gītā* itself is expressed by the briefest definition of *yoga* in verse 50, which says:

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते।
तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्॥५०॥

Buddhiyukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛtaduṣkṛte;
Tasmādyogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam—2. 50

'Endued with this evenness of *buddhi*, one frees oneself in this very life, alike from virtue and vice; devote yourself, therefore, to this *yoga. Yoga is efficiency in action*.'

What a brief definition! *Buddhiyukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛtaduṣkṛte*. 'All these dualities of *sukṛta* and *duṣkṛta;* good deeds and bad deeds, that we do in our lower life are full of these conflicts'. But, 'when you rise to the level of *buddhi,* you go beyond these conflicting dualities'— *buddhiyukto jahāti iha ubhe sukṛtaduṣkṛte. Tasmāt,* 'therefore', *yogāya yujyasva,* 'connect yourself with this philosophy and technique of *yoga'.* Get your whole mind and heart established in *yoga.* Then, what is *yoga?* The last phrase explains it. *Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam,* '*yoga* is efficiency or dexterity in action'. You are working; that is beautiful. It can become not only a means for your worldly welfare but also a school of your own inner development. *That is the unique feature of the Gītāteaching. In no other religious literature, in India or abroad, you find this definition of spirituality. Spirituality is defined here as efficiency in work. What kind of definition is it? It is a combination of productive efficiency without, and spiritual efficiency within*.

Efficiency is a great word and it is a great characteristic of modern Western civilization. Everything must be efficient, efficient machines,

efficient workers, efficient managers, efficient doctors and efficient nurses. Śrī Kṛṣṇa also stresses this concept of productive efficiency: with minimum effort producing maximum results. There you can see efficiency in various departments of modern life and work. Accepting this, the *Gītā* introduces a second and higher dimension of efficiency, which is greatly needed today in our civilization. There are two levels of efficiency in work. When you work, you change the world around you. It is work that changes the world around you. You dig a pit, the world is changed thereby; you build a house, the world is changed. And today, you build so many industries and other things, the world is changed— sometimes for good, sometimes for bad. That is the one result of work; you change the ratio of forces around you by the work that you do. That is one aspect of work that is highly emphasized in modern Western civilization, and that is being accepted by non-Western countries as well. But, Śrī Kṛṣṇa emphasizes a second aspect also which is much neglected in modern civilization. It refers to what has happened to your mind by that productive efficiency? Has that work done any good to your mind; has it made you better, purer, broader? Has it made you realize your own true nature? If that is done, efficiency gets a second dimension.

In normal language we say, productive efficiency is the first type of efficiency. Good workers, strong, efficient farmers, industrial workers, administrators, professional people, everyone must be efficient to discharge one's responsibilities to society. That is one aspect of efficiency. The second aspect is highly neglected, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa stresses it throughout the *Gītā*. See what has happened to you after years of productive efficiency. Have you grown spiritually? Have you realized something of the divine spark that is within you? Have you gone beyond the body-mind complex and its pulls and pressures, and become calm and steady within yourself? All these are profound questions that some people in modern Western civilization are asking. What has happened to the human being? He or she has been a good worker. But he or she has become a broken person after years of productive efficiency. Work has done no good to the worker, except his or her salary and whatever creature comforts could come out of that salary. What about the inner life of the worker? Is he or she rich within, peaceful and fulfilled? In this way, Śrī Kṛṣṇa defines the *yoga* taught in the *Gītā* as a double efficiency: productive work efficiency, and inward personal or character

efficiency. These must go side by side. Don't separate these two. By the same work, if one can achieve two great things, how much greater will be our profit thereby?

This second emphasis is highly needed today all over the world, because we find man has become smaller and smaller, more subject to tension, sorrow, unfulfilment, and suicidal tendencies. All these things are there in this most efficient technological civilization. Man has become a creature of the environment, *jantu,* i.e., creature, as we call it in Sanskrit. Because we neglected the second dimension to the concept of efficiency. The *Gītā* gently advises all working people to take care of this also. As you work, you bring blessings to society by your honest, efficient, co-operative labour in whatever fields you are working; see also that your inner life becomes qualitatively richer, full of joy, full of peace, full of love and concern for humanity. That is spiritual growth. Today, we can call it a qualitative enrichment of human life.

And this is the first time, modern science, especially twentieth-century biology, is stressing the importance of quality in human life. Earlier, the stress was all on quantity. But today, evolution, at the human stage, needs this criterion of quality to show that there is progress. What is that quality of your life? Quantity of production, quantity of consumption, we stress again and again. And all work efficiency goes for that. And this consumption goes on, galloping, even beyond the luxuries of life; a mad consumerism has set in. That is civilization today. But the result is the qualitative impoverishment of man. Why? Because modern science has no insight into human nature beyond the sensory level. Therefore, one aspect of efficiency is stressed and the other is neglected. That second aspect is slowly attracting the attention of the modern mind, that there is a science and technology by which you can enrich yourself qualitatively.

This warning is being given now by some of the scientists themselves. I refer to the British biologist, Sir Julian Huxley. In his lecture on *The Evolutionary Vision* at the Chicago Congress of Scientists celebrating Darwin Centenary in 1959, he refers to this subject (*Issues in Evolution, Evolution After Darwin,* vol. 3, p. 259):

‘Once we truly believe that man’s destiny is to make possible greater fulfilment for human beings and fuller achievement by human societies, utility in the customary sense becomes subordinate. Quantity of material production is, of course, necessary only up to a certain degree. More than a certain number of calories or cocktails or TV sets or washing machines per person, is not merely unnecessary, but bad. Quantity of material production is a means to a further end, and not an end in itself.’

Now, Śrī Kṛṣṇa foresaw this kind of difficulty for humanity. He was a great worker himself. And so, he developed a philosophy, so many thousand years ago, where efficiency gets a double dimension, where quantity *and* quality go together. Are those who work efficiently peaceful? Can they live at peace with each other? Serve each other? These are all important questions. We shall succeed to abolish war, violence, and crime from society by this qualitative enrichment of human life. There is no other way except this. But we in India have been neglecting the work side of our life. We have to develop that side very much today. Our problems like poverty and backwardness cannot be overcome without stress on work, efficient work, and team work; these are all great demands on our national character today. When we become good workers, producing goods and services, we shall solve the problem of mass poverty in India. All the eight hundred million people, well fed, well educated, well housed, what a beautiful development will it be! So, productive efficiency is a profound message for all of us in all these developing countries, especially for India and Africa. But even in the course of doing so, we should not neglect the second dimension. We have already started neglecting it, and we are already reaping its bitter fruits. More of mental tension, more of strain, more of break-down, all these things are also coming to us. And to us, till now, religion means only doing some ritual, or paying some money to the priest to do the ritual. No benefit is going to come to you thereby unless your mind is trained. All happiness and peace come from and in the mind, they don’t come from outside. When the mind is properly trained, it becomes peaceful. So, this training of the mind must go on as part of the work that we do, we have to take special care in India if we want to preserve the spiritual quality of our cultural heritage.

So, this concept of personality efficiency, inward efficiency, is very much needed in all parts of the world today. Soviet Russia is feeling the need for this great philosophy. There is nobody to teach these things. It is a profound subject that people are seeking for. And so, the books like the *Gītā* are being sought after and read by increasing numbers of people. I am sure some good will come by one's own reading, and trying to apply the teaching as much as possible in one's own life and work. This special declaration, *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam,* is a unique type of definition of man's spiritual life, not opposed to man's worldly life, but comprehending both of them. *Yoga* of the *Gītā* comprehends both dimensions of human life, outer life and inner life. Outer life of work, inner life of inward development. *Gītā* doesn't make a gulf between one's secular life and religious life. That gulf has been bridged by Śrī Kṛṣṇa ages ago. So, this definition will appeal to every thinking mind, to every rational mind, to agnostics, even to atheists, who are afraid of the word 'religion'. There is no religion in all this, by way of dogma and ritual in the normal sense of the term. It is a comprehensive philosophy of life, philosophy and spirituality of life, that one gets from the *yoga* of the *Gītā*. It is meant for every human being. Let us, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, be *yogīs.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa is whispering to everybody, 'be a *yogī.*' Immediately many of us may come to the wrong conclusion: 'to be a *yogī,* we must be a special kind of people; some magic, some miracles, this and that, must be there to be *yogīs.'* Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'no, I don't mean any of that. I mean the most normal life, but with a depth added to it.' What a universal philosophy it is! You are living, you are working, you are dealing with others, and in all this, you are also shaping your mind and heart, trying to manifest the divine spark that is within you. In this way, a parallel development takes place, externally, social welfare and development, inwardly, spiritual growth and fulfilment.

And some of these ideas are coming to us from modern biology, that the goal of evolution at the human stage is not organic satisfaction, numerical increase, or organic survival. These are the words of Sir Julian Huxley and others of the twentieth century biology. At the pre-human phase of evolution, these were the goals. Every animal wants organic satisfaction. It needs numerical increase. It needs organic survival. Everything it does is for organic survival, as far as possible. But, in this twentieth century,

evolution has found a new goal at the human level. That Huxley defines as fulfilment; organic satisfaction, organic survival, numerical increase, these are all secondary. The primary objective is fulfilment, what a beautiful term! It is by introducing this concept of fulfilment that Huxley coined that phrase which I quoted earlier: 'If fulfilment is the goal of evolution, we shall need a new science of human possibilities.' What are these possibilities and how to bring them out? At present we don't have it in the West. But when you study India's Vedanta, you come across this very science and the technique of manifesting in life those possibilities. And so, this definition of *yoga* as *karmasu kauśalam* must be meditated upon by everyone to get the best out of it. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa whispers to everyone of us, 'be a *yogī,* be a *yogī*.' I spoke at the Mussorie Lal Bahadur Shastry Academy of Administration on *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam* because the Indian Administrative Service, the I.A.S., has taken this as its motto. This is not merely for the I.A.S., but for every one; Śrī Kṛṣṇa whispers to a government official, 'be a *yogī*'; to a teacher or a doctor, and to everyone, 'be a *yogī*'. What type of *yogī?* Not the cheap kind of *yoga* which you get, by change of dress and external forms. Some profound change takes place *in* you. A new ratio of forces comes *within* you. That is the spiritual growth of man; and that takes place in the context of work itself, in the context of human relations. *What can be a more luminous and universal and practical message than this*!

Work hard, bring happiness and welfare to society through your work. This cannot be done by simply praying to God or by performing some rituals. That has been our mistake. We sought for material improvements by rituals and ceremonies. To obtain wealth, one installs a picture of Lakṣmī, goddess of wealth, and goes on doing *ārati* before that picture. That was the foolish thing many people did. Go and work. That is what creates Lakṣmī. Lakṣmī is the product of efficient labour, co-operative labour. In recent centuries, we forgot cleanly this truth: one can worship the picture of the goddess after doing hard work. Not understanding the meaning of Sarasvatī, the goddess of knowledge, by merely worshipping a picture of Sarasvatī, we are not going to achieve knowledge. These are only symbolic worship, just a picture you worship once in a year, and be quite happy, after doing hard and productive work and after study of books and thinking for oneself;

that is how knowledge comes. That lesson we forgot. We have to regain and re-learn it today. We shall be true devotees of Sarasvatī and Lakṣmī and we shall learn a new lesson in this modern period, which Swami Vivekananda particularly stressed, that Lakṣmī is the product of Sarasvatī. The more knowledge you have, the more wealth you will be able to create. Ignorance is not able to create wealth. First, therefore, pursue knowledge; that is called the worship of Sarasvatī. Then, apply that knowledge to the nature's forces around you. That becomes wealth, that becomes Lakṣmī. They are two very beautiful loving sisters. The old experience was that they are jealous sisters. Wherever Lakṣmī comes, from there Sarasvatī will run away and vice versa! In our case it was true. Rich people may not have much knowledge, and knowing people will not have much wealth. That has been our condition, not understanding the true meaning of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. Today, we have to bring back these two sisters to every home, to the whole of our society. *First* Sarasvatī, *then* Lakṣmī. Apply your knowledge, then wealth comes.

Pure science and applied science, we say. Knowledge transforming into the fruit by way of economic and environmental development. Even today, our rural population, if they had better education up to the 8th class, even if not up to the Matriculation standard, how much development would have taken place all over India! The real worship is study, deep thinking and hard work. That has to come back to India. But, if economic prosperity comes, and if poverty comes in your mind and heart, that will be a tragedy. We shall abolish it from the mind and the heart also by developing the spiritual awareness within ourselves. Those who have become good workers and developed high character, public spirit, spirit of service and dedication, they will be the greatest asset of any nation. To produce such people in abundance in all parts of the world, is the mission of the *Gītā* in the modern age. And the *Gītā* will do it, and people are seeking for such a rational practical religion, without any kind of mystification or dogmatic and credal limitation. So, this brief definition must be studied and thought over and applied according to one's own strength.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa had earlier said: 'Even a little of it is good': *svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt.* If productive efficiency increases even by five percent in India, we shall be taking leave of all this poverty and

backwardness. Śrī Kṛṣṇa asks me to be a *yogī.* I can't be a hundred percent *yogī;* so I will remain what I am; that is not a correct attitude. Become a *yogī* one percent, five percent, as much as you can. All that is going to bring a lot of blessing to you and to your society. That truth we have to keep in view constantly. All laziness must go from our society; in the name of religion, we became lazy; in the name of meditation, in the name of *samādhi,* we became lazy and went to sleep for centuries together. This *Gītā* comes like a clarion call, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *śaṅkha-dhvani,* to wake us up. He will say that in the eleventh chapter (verse 33): *Tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva jitvā śatrūn bhuṅkṣva rājyam samṛddham,* 'Arjuna, get up', *tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva,* 'acquire the glory that belongs to man'. There is a glory attached to human beings. We have lost this glory; we have to regain it now. *Jitvā śatrūn,* 'overcoming your enemies', in the form of poverty, backwardness, etc. And then, *bhuṅkṣva rājyam samṛddham,* 'enjoy life fully in this beautiful country of ours'. How wonderful will be that state! When today's poverty and backwardness are overcome, in that kind of a country, it is a pleasure to live and to interact with each other. That kind of change will come when this philosophy becomes applied by increasing numbers of our people.

Swami Vivekananda calls it 'Practical Vedanta'. Vedanta has been till now a matter for discussion, what is called tea-table *carcā* or discussion. All over India we had this kind of Vedanta *carcā.* I have seen it actually when I was in Mysore; many *paṇḍits* will gather together after meals at noon. 'Now let us discuss something. What subject shall we take?' Then one of them will say, 'Our cloth is not clean, so, we shall not discuss our own *sampradāya;* we shall discuss the other *sampradāya*!' Such pettiness was there, and the great Vedanta was lost in all this morass of superstition and wordy arguments. Then Swami Vivekananda came bringing with him the lion roar, *simhagarjan,* of Practical Vedanta.

This is the first time we are having a nationwide effort to build a Vedantic society and civilization in our country, which will combine worldly welfare and spiritual development. Both will go side by side. That is the *yoga* of the *Gītā*. You will get its confirmation when we study the last verse of the *Gītā* some months later, where Sañjaya concludes the whole book, 'Wherever there is the spirit of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, wherever there is the spirit

of Arjuna, in that society there will be *Śrī,* prosperity, *vijaya*, victory, *bhūti*, general welfare, and *dhruvā nīti*, perennial justice.' This is a beautiful summing up of the *Gītā* with respect to human life and destiny. So, today, our whole stress must be on practical Vedanta. Theory we have in plenty, tons and tons of theory, but one ounce of practice is worth tons of theory. That lesson we have to learn. Let us live this Vedanta as much as we can.

Swami Vivekananda, therefore, stressed practical Vedanta again and again. In his Madras Lecture in 1897, he took up the subject of *Vedanta and Its Application to Indian Life*. In his Lahore lecture, a few months later, he exhorted our people: 'Wipe off this blot, of untouchability and casteism'. Let us learn to treat man as man, not as a creature. When millions of our educated citizens will assimilate the Vedantic spirit, India will experience a thorough revolution in its politics and society. In a military revolution, so many people will be killed, not much gain will be there towards the end. But this type of revolution, the thought revolution, the attitude revolution—that will be permanent. That is what we need. A few do's and don'ts cannot help to bring about that revolution. It is like the code of conduct being discussed for all sorts of people—doctors, lawyers, engineers, politicians, everybody. You can have a whole volume of code of conduct! What does it matter? I won't do wrong when you are looking at me. When you are not looking at me, I will do what I like. That is called your so-called code of conduct. A little good it may do, when I am serious about it. Otherwise, do's and don'ts do not make any difference to me. People have become sufficiently cynical today. So, do's and don'ts will not help you. But, if you can change your mind, be convinced, 'this is a better way, this is a better way,' then high character will come out of that individual. We have to keep in view that it is the thought behind the actions that has to be handled. Then, not only this action, every subsequent action, will be in terms of that new thought. So, thought revolution is what we need.

Vivekananda said: spread healthy ethical, humanistic, spiritual ideas all over India. A great development will come thereby. This is the importance of this *yoga* of the *Gītā*. Always remember, it is entirely practical. It shapes our work and our life in new forms, bringing beauty and qualitative richness to the individual concerned. And so, this definition, *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam,* is just a brief definition. Two *ślokas* earlier, Śrī Kṛṣṇa had

defined *yoga* as, *samatvam yoga ucyate,* 'equanimity, evenness of mind, is *yoga'*. This is a complement to that, and much more pervasive in meaning. *Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam,* this teaching, has to go round the world, because today we need a philosophy which can bring quality to human life. Stress on quantity alone has almost destroyed the stability of modern civilization.

We can't have religion by paying money to a priest to recite some mantra there. Most of us believe in that kind of religion. To what low level has our concept of religion come! The lowest level is what I noted in places like Hardwar; you go, pay five rupees to a *paṇḍā,* take hold of the tail of a cow, and you will go to heaven. That is called religion to many people. To what a low level it has gone! What has happened to *you* thereby? Nothing, *paṇḍā* got five rupees, and you held the tail of a cow; you are the same, cow is the same, and *paṇḍā* is the same. No difference at all. But this inner growth, spiritual growth, *adhyātmika-vikāsa,* slowly, gently, taking place, there is no big show about it, no flash about it; We thought of becoming saints by show. Showy saints; there is no showy sainthood. A very ordinary looking person may be a tremendous saint. Such saints we need in our society. We have got professional saints. That is too much in India. But sainthood comes to you normally, naturally, as a growth—that is the type of sainthood we need scattered all over India. Otherwise, like a huge banyan tree, and small shrubs all around, that is India. A few great giants of spirituality, and so many small pigmies around.

If an average citizen uses one's work situation properly, he or she will be spiritual. It is this type of life that the *Gītā* expounds throughout these eighteen chapters. We are just at the beginning of the *yoga* message. Starting from now, this concept of *yoga* will become richer and richer just like a Ganga starting from Gangotri, becomes bigger and bigger, when new tributaries enter into it, until, when you come to Allahabad, it becomes a mighty river of holiness and agricultural prosperity. Similarly, the *Gītā* also grows; as the chapters proceed, new ideas, new dimensions of life, new values come in. Specially, the great tide of *bhakti* comes in a little later. *Karma* becomes completely transformed when *bhakti* also enters into the picture. That development will come later. Here we are just at the beginning. That is why this definition has a great part to play to reshape our thinking and outlook. *Yoga-buddhi, buddhi-yoga*—both are used—the

buddhi which is fixed in *yoga*, or the *yoga* that inspires *buddhi,* that *buddhi* we have to utilize to work and for human relations, that *buddhi* is what takes you to your spiritual dimension.

When Vivekananda returned to India after four years of successful work in the West, he set to organizing his nation-building and man-making work in India, the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement. Just like the phrase you have in the *Gītā, yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam,* he gave a similar brief motto. That motto is: *ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*, 'for one's own liberation and for the welfare of the world.' Combine work for the world with work for your own spiritual liberation. If the first part of the motto is not emphasized, we become used as a machine, and, when the machine is old, it is thrown into the scrap heap. That will be our condition. That should not be. *ātmano mokṣārtham,* you must become freer and freer. This cannot come unless you orient your work situation in this inward direction. Not merely a productive individual; a machine also is a productive unit. Some of the machines can do more work than you and I can do. When you cease to work also, you have some value within you, an intrinsic value. Raise the nation, raise the people of the world, to the highest level of human development. That is external work. While doing so, *ātmano mokṣārtham,* be free spiritually. Achieve your own spiritual perfection. That is the message you get in this definition of *yoga* by the *Gītā* and Swamiji's motto for the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement. What a wonderful new message is coming out of the old *Gītā,* through new teachers, for the good of all, in this modern age.

Yoga is the theme of the whole *Gītā*. According to Lokamanya Tilak in his famous book *GītāRahasya,* the word *yoga* and its associates have come more than eighty times throughout the *Gītā*. And towards the end of the *Gītā*, Sañjaya also tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra that it was 'my' blessed privilege, through Vyāsa's grace, to listen to the exposition of yoga by 'Yogeśvara Kṛṣṇa' himself. Also, at the end of every chapter of the *Gītā,* it is reiterated that it is an exposition of the science of *yoga: Śrīmad bhagavad Gītāsu upaniṣadsu brahmavidyāyām yogaśāstre Śrī Kṛṣṇārjuna samvāde,* 'thus in this *Bhagavad Gītā*, it is an Upaniṣad taken out of *Brahma Vidyā* (Science of Brahman) in the science of *yoga,* in the dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna'.

I wish to stress this point that the entire stress in the *Gītā* is on man or woman at work, and how to utilize that work situation for one's own good and for the good of the world. A few verses later, Arjuna is going to ask this very question, what is the nature of that stability, that strength, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa will answer him in very well-known verses, which will close this second chapter. And now, we take up the next verse, verse 51.

कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि फलं त्यक्त्वा मनीषिण:।
जन्मबन्धविनिर्मुक्ता: पदं गच्छन्त्यनामयम्॥५१॥

Karmajam buddhiyuktā hi phalam tyaktvā manīṣiṇaḥ;
Janmabandhavinirmuktāḥ padam gacchantyanāmayam—2. 51

'The wise, possessed of this evenness of mind, abandoning the fruits of their actions, freed for ever from the fetters of births, go to that state which is beyond all evil.'

Karmajam phalam, 'whatever fruits come out of *karma';* those who have *yoga-buddhi,* they know how to handle those fruits. They never take these fruits for themselves. *Karmajam buddhiyuktā hi, phalam tyaktvā,* 'they renounce these fruits for the good of all'. *Manīṣiṇaḥ,* 'the wise people'; *janmabandha vinirmuktāḥ,* 'they become freed from the bondages of birth and death'. *Padam gacchanti anāmayam,* 'they attain to that state free from all evil'. When? Here, in this very life. That is a great stress in all Vedanta and the *Gītā*—not a promise to be realized in a heaven, a post-mortem heaven, but here itself you will reap the fruit, you will know that this is true. This can be achieved, this has been achieved by people. I can also achieve it. So, I am fashioning my life and work in such a way that, that blessing will come into my life—what I referred to earlier as the main theme of twentieth century biological evolution, namely, quality. This is what is to be achieved in the course of our lives and work. That is the philosophy Śrī Kṛṣṇa is expounding here.

At every place, Śaṅkarācārya will say, *ihaiva, ihaiva,* 'here itself, here itself.' Generally, religion gives us something of a promise in a future life. That is not the philosophy taught in the *Gītā*, or in the Upaniṣads. It is all 'here and now.' That infinite nature of man. When you realize it, you realize

it here itself. That is how fulfilment comes in human life in this very world. It is said of Buddha that he achieved *bodhi,* illumination, at Bodh Gaya. And so the concept of spiritual realization in Vedanta and Buddhism is very unique. You get 'it' here and now. And in the case of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Buddha, you will find the story that Brahma and Indra, even gods in heaven, they came down to be blessed by these two great personalities. Anyone who realizes this truth here, is far superior to all the gods which we or others have. The greatness of the human system is such that the divine is present within him or her with the organic capacity to realize that truth. What heaven can compare with this remarkable achievement of spiritual realization here and now. And so, verse 52 tells us:

दा ते मोहकलिलं बुद्धिर्व्यतितरिष्यति।
तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च॥५२॥

Yadā te mohakalilam buddhirvyatitariṣyati;
Tadā gantāsi nirvedam śrotavyasya śrutasya ca— 2. 52

'When your intellect crosses beyond the taint of illusion, then shall you attain to indifference, regarding things heard and things yet to be heard.'

This reference to Arjuna is also a reference to all of us. Our minds are confused, *yadā te mohakalilam buddhiḥ vyatitariṣyati,* 'when your mind will cross this area of *moha,* delusion'; clear thinking with pure mind helps us to cross the ocean of delusion. And, when you do so, *tadā gantāsi nirvedam śrotavyasya śrutasya ca,* 'then you will get utter dispassion for things heard and things yet to be heard'. 'I want to hear this, I want to know this': mind is constantly flickering all the time. But that will end and stability will come. You don't need to read books, or to hear this and hear that. You have gone beyond it. In Vedanta, this idea that a seeker can go beyond books is very very important. On this subject, the next few verses will tell us much more. The next verse, 53, says:

श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना ते यदा स्थास्यति निश्चला।
समाधावचला बुद्धिस्तदा योगमवाप्स्यसि॥५३॥

Śrutivipratipannā te yadā sthāsyati niścalā;

Samādhāvacalā buddhistadā yogamavāpsyasi— 2. 53

'When your intellect, tossed about by the conflict of opinions, has become immovable and firmly established in the Self, then you will attain Self-realization.'

When your mind, 'which is disturbed by conflicting ideas coming from hearing this and hearing that, etc.,' *śrutivipratipannā*; some books say this, some books say that, some man says this, some man says that. Here, in the midst of conflicting situations, mind is never peaceful. When that kind of situation changes, *yadā sthāsyati niścalā,* 'when the mind becomes steady', overcoming all this distraction of hearing this, hearing that, reading this, reading that, etc., that mind becomes steady. Where? *Samādhau,* 'in *samādhi'*. What is *samādhi?* Says Śaṅkarācārya: *Asmin samādhīyate iti samādhiḥ,* 'That in which you get established, i.e., in your Self'; that is the Atman, your own infinite Self. *Achalā, buddhiḥ,* 'the *buddhi* becomes *achalā,* immovable, steady'. That is the state you will get by what is called spiritual progress. There is such a thing as *adhyātmika vikāśa,* spiritual growth.

In all the teachings of the *Gītā*, you find this stress on spiritual growth. In ordinary ritualism, that concept of spiritual growth is never emphasized. We pay some five rupees to a priest, he does some ritual, and we are satisfied, but we remain the same. Even at the age of eighty, it is the same mind. No change at all. But, in the science of spirituality, which is the *Gītā*, there is this stress on spiritual growth. Are you growing spiritually? Are you spiritually stronger and stronger? Are you more peaceful? Are you more compassionate? Is the infinite Atman manifesting in your life and work? All that is spiritual growth. Without spiritual growth, religion becomes a mere static piety. It does no good at all. And it can do much harm also. So much of fanaticism and show. All this will come in religion, when that stress on spiritual growth is not there. That is the story of most of the religions of the world. Vivekananda wrote in a letter (*Complete Works,* vol. 7, p. 501),

'Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What we want is character.'

Every religion today has become dead from this point of view. In the name of religion, we can do any amount of wickedness and violence and human discrimination. That religion has no value today. What is to be stressed is the spiritual growth of men and women. As the body grows, as the mind grows, spirituality also grows. Stress that point again and again. *Yoga* is something to be achieved. We have to go step by step. There is nothing external about it, no show. That simple housewife, or a labourer in the fields, everyone can develop spirituality. That is our birthright. So, people developing spiritually in every department of life—that will be the great situation when the *Gītā* is understood by more and more people in the way in which it is meant to be understood. *Yoga* as the spiritual growth and fulfilment of men and women everywhere. We get established in our own infinite Self. That is the most important feeling we must develop by watching one's mind, one's actions, and one's inter-human relations. The word *samādhi,* Śaṅkara interprets as *asmin samādhīyate iti samādhi.* 'That in which the mind is established, that is called *samādhi'.* What is that thing? Atman, your own infinite divine nature.

Through the path of *yoga,* you realize your own true nature. What a beautiful concept! We don't know our own nature. Even when we get mental distortions, when there is a psychic breakdown or nervous breakdown, we lose our own nature. We behave like children at that time. Then psychiatry will come and put us back into our own true nature. We become normal again. So, the greatest thing we can do to ourselves is to *be* ourselves. What is that? I am the Atman. I am that infinite one, ever pure, ever free, ever enlightened, that is my true nature. Let me rise to that level. At this stage, we are now in a hypnotic condition. All sorts of evil things we are doing, not knowing our true nature. That is why Vivekananda presented Vedanta in the West as the philosophy which de-hypnotizes people. People are already hypnotized, I am black, I am white, I am man, woman, I am rich, poor, all these are hypnotism. Vivekananda's Vedanta is to de-hypnotize people by installing them on their own true nature. That is *yoga. Tadā yogam avāpsyasi,* 'then you will really attain *yoga,*' in the true sense of the term. So, when this subject was presented by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna got an opportunity to put a question. During all this time, Arjuna has been simply listening. In the beginning of the chapter, he had put some questions.

And now he gets an opportunity to put another question, and that question is on behalf of all of us, as you will find. We also want to know that subject which Arjuna is posing before Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca—

'Arjuna said:'

This last section, verses 54 to 72, is devoted to this subject which is that state of absolute stability, strength and infinite compassion. Something great has taken place in the human being. All that is petty and small has been washed away. What is that state? We want to know. So, Arjuna is asking that question on behalf of all of us:

स्थितप्रज्ञस्य का भाषा समाधिस्थस्य केशव।
स्थितधीः किं प्रभाषेत किमासीत व्रजेत किम्॥५४॥

Sthitaprajñasya kā bhāṣā samādhisthasya keśava;
Sthitadhīḥ kim prabhāṣeta kimāsīta vrajeta kim— 2. 54

'What, O Keśava, is the description of a person of steady wisdom, merged in *Samādhi?* How does the person of steady wisdom speak, how sit, how walk?'

How does a *sthitaprajña* live, move, talk and behave? That is the basic question Arjuna is asking. Outwardly he looks like me and you. Inwardly, there is a tremendous difference. That is a subject we should all remember. We all look alike outwardly, but inwardly the stuff inside is different. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: just now you had the Gaṇeśa festival; many houses made that *modaka;* beautiful sweet; inside which is coconut and jaggery and very thin rice powder covering it; very tasteful. Now that is coconut and jaggery. Suppose you put only some *ḍāl* powder-mix inside, that will be inferior quality. So, sweets may be very nice from outside; inside may be different stuff. Similarly, all human beings look alike, but, inside the stuff is different. There is one who is so lofty, whose mind is always thinking of the happiness and welfare of all people; outwardly he or she looks ordinary. Here is another person who is petty, small, trying to

cheat people. They both look alike, but inwardly they are different. In Bhāsā's *Avimāra,* the great dramatist of about 6th or 7th century AD, there is one verse which says, *prājñasya mūrkhasya ca kārya-yoge samatvam abhyeti tanuḥ na buddhiḥ.* 'When a wise person and a foolish person work, there is similarity at the bodily level, but dissimilarity in their *buddhi* level'. It is there we read the character of a person. We must be able to go beyond the appearance and see what is inside. And so, how does one of steady wisdom, *sthita-prajña, sthita* means steady, *prajñā* means wisdom, 'how does he or she appear, *kā bhāṣā?* What is his or her nature? *Samādhisthasya keśava,* 'who has established oneself in the Atman', *sthitadhīḥ kim prabhāṣeta kimāsīta vrajeta kim?* What does one of steady wisdom say? How does one like that sit or move about? All these questions Arjuna is putting through that one verse. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives the answer, which form the verses of the book up to the end of this second chapter.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'Śrī Bhagavān said.'

Every one of these verses is so full of meaning. They contain the science of human depth dimension yet unknown to modern physical science. In no part of the world will you find this penetrating study of the human mind—up to the very depths, and then wisdom, not only knowledge, coming out of that investigation. Depth study of the mind started only in the beginning of this century in the West through Freud's analysis of the subconscious levels of mind. That study revealed man in the worst light. And the West today is trying to get rid of that obsession, what you call Freudianism. Freudian study was depth study, but a minimal one, revealing only sex and violence, and irrationality. But from his time, including his disciples like Carl Jung and, later on, Maslow and others in America, they have been trying to see something deeper in the human psyche, apart from sex and violence. That work is going on. That work is getting joined with India's contribution to human depth psychology. And today there is a beautiful meeting of the East and the West in this field of psychology, and, in that context, these verses will be of tremendous significance.

प्रजहाति यदा कामान्सर्वान्पार्थ मनोगतान्।
आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते॥५५॥

Prajahāti yadā kāmānsarvānpārtha manogatān;
ātmanyevātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñastadocyate— 2. 55

'When one completely casts away, O Pārtha, all the desires of the mind, satisfied in the Self alone by the Self, then he or she is said to be one of steady wisdom.'

That person is a *sthitaprajña* in that condition, what is that condition? When he or she has overcome all the desires of the heart, 'I want this, I want that.' When the mind and the heart cease to hanker after this and that. A stage will come in life when a person realizes that these petty desires are nothing compared to his or her true nature as the infinite and ever free Atman. Why should I identify myself with them? We thus overcome desires

by intelligent understanding that nothing can equal in value my own infinite Self, neither five rupees nor a million rupees, nor any other big gift from outside. How can they compare with the infinite value of the Self which is my true nature? This knowledge comes after a long struggle of inward penetration. As a child, 'I want this, I want that.' A child cannot understand its own true nature. So, always it wants something to eat, something to bite, something to play with; always out, out, out, the child-mind goes. But, when the mature mind comes, it realizes that these things are nothing compared to one's own true stature. That is a tremendous life achievement. Today, however, many people do not have that idea that the Atman within me, my own infinite dimension, is far superior to all the petty things of the external world—lust and gold, name and fame; all these we seek in the external world impelled by desire. And desire is the movement of the mind out. I am not satisfied within me, I want something from the outer world. That is how desire operates. But, by discrimination, by the practice of *yoga,* step by step, we come to a stage which is described here.

Prajahāti yadā kāmān, manogatān, 'when all the *kāmas* or desires of the heart are thrown away', that is one statement; and Śaṅkarācārya tells us in his commentary that that alone cannot make you a *sthitaprajña.* 'I don't desire anything.' It can be a pathological state. There may not be anything spiritual about it. When you go to a mental hospital, you will find some people who fully accord with what is said in the teaching of the first line, 'I don't want anything,' arising from what they call in psychology an apathetic attitude. There are such mental cases in the hospital, they live in a corner, don't want anything. They are immersed in themselves all the time. Are they *sthitaprajñas?* Not at all. So, the first line is not enough. Śaṅkara is going to say that something greater is to be added to it. That is what is said in the second line: *ātmanyeva ātmanā tuṣṭaḥ*, he or she is fully delighted in the Self by the Self. Because of *that,* I don't want anything. That is the nature of true and positive renunciation. I have got something infinite with me. What can these petty things do for me? They are all tinsel, without any value, like children running after toys, bubbles, etc. 'I am not a child, I don't want these things,' we say when we are grown up. Similarly, the highest maturity of the human mind is that it is not dragged away by desirable objects from outside. Not by any effort, but by an effortless

spontaneous process arising from one's knowledge of one's own infinite nature. I am the infinite Atman. What can these things do to me? That is renunciation, natural and spontaneous.

I once read a story of a Catholic Christian saint of the very early centuries. That saint had a friend, a magistrate. The magistrate was telling another friend, 'before I die, I want to give all my property to this saint, my friend.' And that man reported it to the saint. Then the saint asked, 'what did he say?' 'Before I die, I want to give all my property to the saint.' 'Did he say that?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Does he not know that I have already died earlier than himself?' What a beautiful expression! I am already dead to all these things. I don't need any one of these. Now, that is a natural state. There is no need to prod a man to develop that feeling. Because he has achieved something greater, namely, love of God, *bhakti.* What worldly things can compare with that wealth that comes to you through *bhakti*? Therefore, the second line of the verse says, *ātmanyevātmanā tuṣṭaḥ,* 'oneself is satisfied with one's own infinite Atman'. Then only, *sthitaprajñaḥ tadā ucyate,* 'one can be said to be a *sthitaprajña'.* My heart is not empty. First I emptied it of all these finite external desires, but I did not leave it empty, I filled it with the infinite Atman. Then no more desires can come.

This has been expounded in various ways in the Upaniṣads, especially in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* which gives three words: *āptakāma, ātmakāma, akāma.* Three statements are there. First is called *āptakāma,* 'all desires have become fulfilled', fully satisfied, that is called *āptakāma.* How? *ātmakāma.* 'When you realize the Atman only', then that state can come. And in that state you become also *akāma,* 'desireless'. This is achievable by every human being, by proper discrimination, by realizing one's own true nature as infinite, immortal, and divine. I am not this tiny body-mind complex. I am not a tiny *creature.* Even in the limited levels of life, this kind of thinking is very very effective. As I often say, a person says: I am a petty school master in a village school, or I am a petty clerk in an office. By this thinking, the person reduces himself or herself to a pettiness, by a wrong attitude. He or she need not do so. He or she can tell that he or she is a citizen of free India, working as a clerk, working as a teacher. There, you put your being first, and function, second. But, normally we put function first, and being, nowhere! The little function you do, you

identify with it. Nobody is petty unless one makes oneself petty. You are a citizen of free India. What can be a greater status than that? So, even in socio-political life, this attitude makes a lot of difference to a human being's status. And in spiritual life, it works wonders. I am the infinite Atman, or I am the child of God. It is very difficult to give up desires; it becomes easy when you realize your own true nature more and more. You don't try to drive them away. 'I don't need them'; that attitude will come. I am full. What a wonderful idea! This is the teaching that makes for *sthitaprajña,* steady wisdom. Even if you get five percent of that steadiness, even that will make your life and work very very rich and joyous. We don't expect millions of people to become fully *sthitaprajñas* of this nature. But, here is the ideal towards which we all can move. If one takes one step, that is a blessing. If one takes more steps, all the better.

The late British agnostic thinker Bertrand Russell says in his post second World War book, *Impact of Science on Society* (pp. 120–21):

'We are in the middle of a race between human knowledge as to means and human folly as to ends. Unless men increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow.'

That is the goal of human evolution. The human being is greater than his or her possessions. This is a truth which sometimes is driven home to us in crises of life.

And I saw this truth revealed during the Burma to India evacuation during the last war. I was in Rangoon from 1939 to 1942, when the Japanese bombing and invasion of Rangoon took place; life in the city was completely dislocated, and people started evacuating to India. They belonged to Andhra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Tamil Nadu; everybody wanted to carry as many of their possessions as possible to India. So, from their households they carried with them big radios, bedding, blankets and many other costly things. But how could they carry all these through the long distance to India? After some distance, one item was left behind on the road, then some other items, till only the person and his or her bare necessities remained as their possessions. And only the person reached India! Such experiences must have occurred in such situations in other parts of the world also.

So in a crisis period, you realize that the ultimate value is the person alone, and not what he or she possesses. I have seen these possessions lying on the road. They knew that they could again gain these possessions if they were alive. How many of us fall down with a desire-wind blowing on us, but if we are well rooted, nothing can blow us away. That rooting is the Atman. My life is rooted in my awareness of the Atman. Then nothing can shake. This is very similar to the famous parable of Jesus in the *New Testament*:

'A foolish man built his house on sand, and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was its fall. But a wise man built his house on rock, and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, because it was founded on a rock.'

A very beautiful parable: when you raise your whole life on this rock of the Atman, nothing can shake it. That is called a steady character. Like a person who has high character strength arising from spiritual awareness, if somebody comes to bribe him with a hundred thousand rupees, he will say to him, 'please go away.' Wherefrom does that strength come? Only from this spiritual dimension of the human being; he or she has founded one's personality on the rock of one's infinite nature. If he or she had founded it only on the sand, a little breeze of five rupees bribery would have made him or her fall down. That steady state will come when these *Gītā* ideas are understood by the people. They are meant to be lived by the people, so that they can become men in the true sense of the term; and not creatures which can be thrown off their balance by some external force. So, *ātmanyevātmanā tuṣṭaḥ,* 'when one becomes delighted in the Atman alone', *sthitaprajñaḥ tadā ucyate,* 'then is one known to be possessed of steady wisdom'. Those who become ascetics, if they continue to be cheerful, then that asceticism is correct asceticism. Ascetics who are cheerful, who have got compassion, who love people, their asceticism is absolutely normal and high level. An ascetic who is dry, who reacts to other people in a very bad way, there is something wrong with that ascetic. He has lost something precious, the joy of the Atman. Joyous asceticism is the most beautiful thing a human being can ever have. Wherefrom has this smile come? From some infinite divine nature within, and not from outside. This has been

expressed in a great verse in ādi Śaṅkarācārya's *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi:* (Verse 543)

Nirdhano'pi sadā tuṣṭo'pyasahāyo mahābalaḥ;
Nityatṛpto'pyabhuñjāno'pyasamaḥ samadarśanaḥ —

What a beautiful expression!

'That person is an extraordinary person who though he or she has no wealth, no power, no resources, is yet full of joy, full of cheer; though he or she has no helpers, is infinitely strong; ever satisfied though not experiencing sense pleasures; though he or she is incomparable, looks upon all others as his or her equal.'

Asamaḥ samadarśanaḥ, he or she is *asamaḥ,* like Mount Everest; no other peak can be equal to it, but yet he or she treats all as one's equal. In our life, we see one person in the political field who approached the ideal depicted in this particular *śloka* of Śaṅkarācārya. That was Mahatma Gandhi. This kind of greatness is called spiritual greatness. Ordinary greatness cannot produce this quality.

Sri Ramakrishna says, '*Śiva* dances with joy realizing his own infinite nature'. This is the possibility hidden in all of us. We are not an item among items in this world. A table or chair, or a property, or this and that, cannot be equated with our own true nature. When we realize this truth a little, we shall still have property, we shall still have money, but we won't be slaves of these. That is the stress placed in the *Gītā*. Life will continue as it is, but value-systems will be different. I won't cheat a man for the sake of a few rupees. I know the value of money, but I know that the value of man is greater than the value of money. In this way, it can change human life from top to bottom. After all, a little change in our attitude and life can make for more and more happiness. Say, in our families, there is often so much of fight and quarrel for a little money; it is a terrible situation. Brothers, sisters, all fighting and quarrelling. That whole picture will change with a bit of this message influencing the minds.

Our people must learn to think and feel for things and persons in a big way. A sister has become a widow; they are there to help and serve her in her unhappy situation, and not to swindle her. That kind of pettiness will

never afflict a society when a little bit of spirituality, a little *sthitaprajñā* attitude, comes to the human mind. So, this first verse of *sthitaprajña* section is the most promising verse: that you give up external attractions in a natural way, because you realize something greater within yourself. A small thing is given up, because a big thing has come to you. You have realized your own bigness, as the finite being underwritten by the infinite Being within you. That knowledge, even a little, can destroy all the pettiness in social life which is afflicting our society just now. It has relevance to all of us in every level of life, because this Atman, infinite and immortal, is our birthright and we have to become aware of it.

During Gandhiji's time, these verses used to be read in his āśrama every day because it is so elevating. Even to think of it, even to meditate upon these ideas, is a great education in human development, human spiritual growth.

For success in life, we need a bit of steadiness of mind. An unsteady mind cannot achieve anything great. Most people have a measure of steadiness. That shows they have given some training to the mind. That training is elaborated here with a lot of insight so that you can achieve greater and greater stability in your inner life. So, the second verse on this subject follows immediately, verse 56:

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः।
वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते॥५६॥

Duḥkheṣvanudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vigataspṛhaḥ;
Vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ sthitadhīrmunirucyate— 2. 56

'One whose mind is not shaken by adversity, who does not hanker after happiness, who has become free from blind attachment, fear, and anger, is indeed the *muni* or sage of steady wisdom.'

That *sthitadhīḥ,* 'that person whose *dhīḥ* or *buddhi* is *sthita,* steady', is called a *muni.* The word *muni* in Sanskrit correctly means, *mananaśīlo muniḥ,* a very thoughtful person. Normally, we associate the word *muni* with one who observes silence. That is only a very external part of that wonderful term. The essential part is 'being deeply thoughtful'. The words

muni and *ṛṣi* are often used in our literature. The *muni* is a great word. Look at a *muni's* face; you will find a thoughtful face, not a light-hearted one, nor an empty, shallow kind of face. We are having democracy today. The success of any democracy depends upon more and more people developing the capacity for thought, and for love and service. Those who live in uncontrolled emotion and frenzy of action, which now characterize most of our politics, they can destroy our democracy. But, in a very stable democracy, we need more of the *muni* quality in human beings. *Mananaśīlo muniḥ,* 'thinking people are *muniḥ*'. All progress in society comes from the capacity to think. When we use the word *muni* in this context, we may feel, 'O! It is a high ideal! How can we be *munis* like that?' But, we can be *munis* at our own level. There are so many levels of being a *muni.* So that is the line we must always remember. *Duḥkheṣu anudvignamanāḥ,* 'whose mind is not depressed by sorrow'. Similarly, *sukheṣu vigataspṛhaḥ*, 'not carried away by ambition in happiness'.

Then comes a beautiful expression: *vīta rāga bhaya krodhaḥ,* 'who has overcome three emotions which are very harmful to man'; what are they? *Rāga, bhaya, krodha*, 'attachment, fear, anger'. These three, beyond a certain range, are highly destructive of happiness and peace in a society. So, this is expressed again and again in the *Gītā*. When we deal with the 4th chapter, we shall be coming across this teaching more explicitly. Now, fear is considered to be an evil throughout Vedanta. It never encourages fear as a religious virtue. That is the one lesson our society must learn. We train our children by instilling fear in them, fear of this and fear of that. Vedanta says, 'no, let children grow in fearlessness'. 'Fearlessness is virtue. Fear is a sin', Swami Vivekananda said. That is a Vedantic teaching. *Bhaya* or fear has no place in the moral education of any child. Normal fears are there. If there is a tiger, I am not going to embrace that tiger! That is intelligent, rational fear. But irrational fear making for abnormality of behaviour has to be avoided. We instil a lot of abnormal fears in our children. And therefore, they can't have a true moral life. They have to be made moral through fear. That is what people generally understand by morality, fear of policemen, fear of public opinion; we try to behave well by such fears. That kind of fear has no place in the psychology of character development as understood in Vedanta. In no other literature do we find fear being considered as bad for a

human being. Fearlessness alone is virtue, not fear. I speak a lie, why? I fear, therefore, I lie. If I have no fear, I shall never speak a lie. I will speak the truth to father or mother. So, children brought up in fearlessness, they will naturally be moral. They will be straightforward. They will be spontaneous in their life. Never instil fear into the minds of children; as grown-ups also, we have to try to overcome fear. This is a running theme in this great book *Bhagavad Gītā*. So, overcome attachment, *rāga, bhaya,* fear, and *krodha,* anger.

It is very difficult to control anger; but, we have to train the mind in controlling anger. First of all, we get angry; we become cool after some time. Then, we must reflect: why did I get angry? I lost control; now I shall try. In this way, by repeated exercise of will-power and dedication to higher causes, we can slowly overcome these evil emotions called fear and hatred. We 'explode' into anger. Harvard University Professor William McDougall's famous book, *Character and the Conduct of Life,* contains a good exposition of this problem of anger, how to control it, and how to make use of it also. It is useful in life. No emotion, including anger, is bad by itself, according to psychology. But, one must know how to handle them. And anger has a place in human life. You see some injustice going on around you; it must rouse your indignation, under control. Unless you have anger, you cannot react properly to it. It will multiply only. So, anger can be channelised into socially useful purposes. That we don't do efficiently in India. We have anger but never channelised to fight evil and seek justice in society. That is where one of the biggest part of education for character comes. McDougall calls that 'righteous indignation'. We see so much injustice around us. We just take our eye away from it, and say, we have nothing to do with it. But useless anger we have in plenty—at home, dealing with dependants. That is why we cannot handle this emotion properly. Educate it, let it be for the good of society. So, that anger has tremendous value in our collective life. Without that anger, evils will multiply. In India; particularly, this is our great drawback. We had no urge for righteous indignation. We let things pass. That kind of attitude has only created a society full of injustice. Some improvements are setting in the modern age. So, though anger is to be removed, it cannot be removed just

by plucking and throwing it away. It is an automation to be educated in a proper direction.

Every one of our emotions, can be educated and disciplined. We have to take the energy of the emotion and use it for some good purpose. In this way, we give a constructive orientation to these emotions. That is how we build up character. 'Emotion, controlled and directed to work, *is* character', says Vivekananda. Ordinary anger, just out of pride and arrogance, is absolutely a static type of energy. It has no value; we have to overcome it. How to overcome anger is told in all these books; but what the books say is nothing, unless we try to put into practice: 'I must overcome', 'I shall overcome'. Then you will find slowly that you are winning the battle.

In many parts of the world, I have come across this one question being asked again and again: How to overcome anger? Even in the West, sometimes, men and women are angry with children, with neighbours; they want to overcome anger. So, I tell all this. But, I also tell a radical method. 'Whenever you are angry, put a few coins in the charity box'; it may make you give up anger when the box is getting full! A second method is to apologize to the person after the anger cools. Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, *sthitadhīḥ,* 'whose *dhī* or *buddhi* is *sthita,* steady'. *Munirucyate,* 'is called a *muni*'. Every citizen must possess a bit of these qualities. Then only we can form a healthy society. Never think that it is enough if we have some *munis* and *ṛṣis* in the Himalayas, and we shall all remain small like as now. That is a very wrong attitude. Every one of us will grow one inch taller morally by trying this kind of disciplining of our emotional energies. Be a *muni*, be thoughtful; thought is behind all social progress. Great thinkers initiate new ideas. That is how progress comes.

But, even Bertrand Russell says, every child has a natural capacity for thinking. One of the aims of our education today is to clear him of this quality. What an observation: the thinking power goes away in education! Without education, there have been people who were great thinkers. Education as it is now, doesn't give us that thinking power. It stifles thinking, because of the emphasis on study—memorising. But what is needed is to stimulate thinking. That must come in our education, so that we shall have thoughtful people, m*unis* in large numbers. Even amongst

professors and students in universities, there is now no question of thinking at all. Everything is excitement, frenzy, and frenzied action. That whole system must change if you want to produce men and women worthy of a great society, capable of creating a greater society. So, that is the importance of this verse and the words specially occurring in this verse. Similarly, the next verse says:

यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम्।
नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता॥५७॥

Yaḥ sarvatrānabhisnehastattatprāpya śubhāśubham;
Nābhinandati na dveṣṭi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā— 2. 57

'One who is everywhere unattached, not pleased at receiving good, nor vexed at evil, his or her wisdom is steady.'

Tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā, 'his or her *prajñā* or wisdom is well established'. Whose? *Yaḥ sarvatra anabhisnehaḥ,* 'who is perfectly detached'. *Tat tat prāpya śubhāśubham, na abhinandati na dveṣṭi,* 'who, whenever favourable things happen, is not elated, and, whenever unfavourable things come, is not depressed'. Such a one has that control of mind. That person's *prajñā* is well established. In life you do need a measure of these qualities and we do find also men and women of this type. We are not like any animal reacting exactly to the stimulus you are getting from outside. We have the capacity to study the situation and discriminate before reacting. When we exercise that quality, we get this kind of stability of our *buddhi,* more and more. And so, the next *śloka* presents an example, one of the famous examples in Vedantic literature:

यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता॥५८॥

yadā samharate cāyam kūrmo'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ;
Indriyāṇi indriyārthebhyaḥ tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā—2. 58

'When also, like the tortoise drawing its limbs, one can completely withdraw the senses from their sense objects, his or her wisdom becomes steady.'

We have studied the tortoise: whenever it senses some trouble outside, it withdraws itself within its shell. And nothing can harm it there: it knows when to withdraw, it knows when to come out also. So, we have to develop this capacity of the tortoise to withdraw into oneself and, later, come out also: *yadā samharate cāyam kūrmo'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ,* 'as a tortoise withdraws all its limbs, and protects itself', similarly, *indriyāṇi indriyārthebhyaḥ,* 'we have to develop the capacity to withdraw our sense organs from the sense objects, and come out later.' This capacity, this freedom, when we develop, then we become a *sthitaprajña. Tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā,* 'his or her *prajñā,* wisdom, is well established'. How much observation of animal behaviour you will find in our literature! The *Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa*, are full of observations of animal behaviour, and how we can learn lessons from the behaviour of animals. Animal stories are in plenty in our literature; it has gone to various countries from India—these animal stories which inspire all children all over the world, even grown-ups also. Then comes the next verse which is a verse containing a deep psychological study of the human mind.

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः।
रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते॥५९॥

Viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ;
Rasavarjam raso'pyasya param dṛṣṭvā nivartate— 2. 59

'Sense objects fall away from the abstinent person, leaving the longing behind. But even that longing ceases when one realizes the supreme.'

Every word is full of meaning. We can study the human being from the surface, but that won't account for his or her activities, successes, and failures. If we can go deep into the human system, and find out and discover what forces are acting there, then we can establish a more stable personality. Just like in modern Western history, there was supposed to be an era of enlightenment up to the beginning of this century, based on rationalism of the human mind. Freudianism challenged this assumption. What is that enlightenment? In one second it can be thrown down by the energy coming from the subconscious and the unconscious. That was a

great discovery, a type of depth psychology, revolutionary as far as the West was concerned. Freud found it full of sex and violence.

But a true depth study of the human mind was thoroughly undertaken over 4000 years ago by the sages of the Upaniṣads who discovered the shining truth of the ever-free and immortal Atman, the Self behind the subconscious levels and behind also the sense-bound ego or self. The exposition of human life and destiny in the *Gītā* is entirely based on the science of human possibilities of the Upaniṣads. In the *Gītā*, that depth knowledge of the human psyche is taken to the highest and deepest level. *Viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ. Dehī,* 'an embodied human being', says to oneself: 'I shall not eat today', and observes a fast. But, the person is not truly fasting. Craving for food is very strong in the mind. Thus, with respect to every sensory craving, by taking away the sense object from your front doesn't make you a self-controlled person. The person is described as *rasavarjam; rasam* is that craving, *rasam*, it is still there. Can you overcome that craving? Then you are wonderful. That is the great statement in the second line. *Param dṛṣṭvā nivartate,* even that craving goes away *'when the supreme Atman is realized'*. When God, who is the Self of all, is realized, even that craving goes away. *Viṣaya* is a technical term in Sanskrit for sense objects, and, *viṣayī* is the term for the subject, the human being. These two are technical terms in Vedanta. When the cravings go, then only you are fully free. Otherwise, craving can create new situations, new kinds of challenges all the time; new temptations can come. But, when the craving itself is gone, absolutely free you become. This is the highest type of mind, where the craving has been completely uprooted, through the knowledge of one's own nature as the infinite Atman.

We have the story in our mythology of God Śiva doing *tapas.* You get it in Poet Kālidāsa's Sanskrit classic in a Himalayan setting, *Kumāra Sambhavam,* where Pārvati is eager to marry Śiva. She comes to Śiva, who was then an ascetic, practising asceticism, and requests Śiva for permission to serve him. For an ascetic to have a young woman to serve is not a good situation, because it will inflame whatever cravings are there. But Śiva was of a different type. He allowed her, yes, you are free to serve me. I have nothing to worry. This subject is put into a beautiful verse by Kālidāsa (1. 58):

Pratyartha bhūtām api tām samādheḥ
suśrūṣamāṇām giriśo anumene;
Vikārahetau sati vikriyante
yeṣām na cetāmsi ta eva dhīrāḥ —

'When Pārvati entreated Śiva for permission to serve him, Śiva knew that this may be an obstacle to his spiritual practices; even though he knew it, he accepted her service'—*giriśo anumene, Giriṣa,* means Śiva, *anumene* means, gave permission. Then comes Kālidāsa's own commentary on it: 'Those persons alone are *dhīras*, i.e., intelligent and heroic', *ta eva dhīrāḥ,* who are not afraid of these conditions, because, *vikārahetau sati vikriyante yeṣām na cetāmsi,* 'their minds are not agitated when agitating circumstances prevail.'

So, this truth: Even the craving goes away when the Atman is realized. Śiva knows his own Śiva-nature, infinite, immortal; as the *Samudra-Manthan* myth tells us, even drinking the poison rising from the churning of the ocean did him no harm at all. And Sri Ramakrishna says in the modern age that every human being has that Śiva nature and, that service of the *jīvas* or human beings is worship of Śiva.

Kālidāsa mentions that Śiva burnt to ashes the Indian cupid, Kāmadeva, after which only the marriage between Śiva and Pārvatī took place, and after Pārvatī herself had undergone severe penances. This Śiva's acceptance of her is presented by the poet in another great verse (5. 86):

Adya-prabhṛtyavanatāṅgi tavāsmi dāsaḥ
krītaḥ tapobhiriti vādini candramaulau;
Arhāya sa niyamajam klamam utsasarja
kleśaḥ phalena hi punaḥ navatām vidhatte —

Śiva said: 'From now onwards, O blameless one, I am your slave; you have purchased me through your austerity. When Śiva, who has, on his head, the crescent moon, said this, she overcame all stress and strain caused by the rules of austerity; all strain and pain become recreated anew when they yield their fruits.'

Because of this spiritual greatness of both, Kālidāsa had said, at the beginning of his book, 'Śiva and Pārvatī, I salute as the parents of the

universe'—*Jagataḥ pitarau vande pārvati-parameśvarau.* What a wonderful pedigree humanity has when the myth says it has such people as parents! This truth is referred to by ancient Vedanta and Sri Ramakrishna in the modern age as the union of, or absolute identity of, Brahman and Śakti; as Śiva and Pārvatī; as God, the Impersonal, and God, the Personal.

Now, this *Gītāśloka,* therefore, is a challenge to everyone:

Viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ;
Rasavarjam rasopyasya param dṛṣṭvā nivartate —

'When the Supreme is realized, even the *rasa* or secret craving of the embodied being, goes away.' Nothing can tempt such a person; he or she is a *dhīraḥ.* That is the language of Vedanta. Then, when we struggle like this, we have to be careful about our sensory system. They are very powerful. That is the theme of the next verse.

यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः।
इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः॥६०॥

Yatato hyapi kaunteya puruṣasya vipaścitaḥ;
Indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabham manaḥ— 2. 60

'The turbulent senses, O son of Kuntī, do violently snatch away the mind of even a wise man who is striving after perfection.'

These are all truths which every human being, boy or girl, should know, if character-development is the goal of education. What is the constitution of the human system? What are their characteristics? We should know them, then we can fare better. Ignorance is no fun. In this whole physical system, this sensory system of the human being is very powerful. Every action comes because of its impulse. So, let us know the nature of that sensory system. *Yatato hyapi kaunteya,* 'even though one is struggling to discipline the sensory system', *puruṣasya vipaścitaḥ,* 'even of a very intelligent wise person', even such a person finds that 'the sense organs are dragging him or her'. *Indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabham manaḥ,* 'the powerful sense organs drag away the mind of even a wise man.' That is the nature of the sensory energy.

In all our books of the science of spirituality, you will find this subject being expounded. This emphasis on sense restraint has no meaning if the human being's personality ends with the body, sense organs, and the mind. This is the position of all materialistic philosophy now current in modern Western culture. But this becomes irrelevant when the depth study of the human being, as done by Vedanta, reveals a luminous and free reality of the Atman in every human being. In the *Manu Smṛti*, there is this beautiful observation. *Balavān indriyagrāmo,* 'the entire sensory system is very powerful'. *Vidvāmsamapi karṣati,* 'they carry away even a *vidvān* or a learned person'. That is the warning given. Vedanta proclaims that humanity's inner journey takes one to something real and profound; therefore, we need this control and discipline of sensory energy. In any character formation, a measure of discipline of sensory energy is essential; otherwise, there is no character formation at all. This attraction of the senses for the sense objects, implanted in us even from the animal stage onwards, is the world of *Māyā* in which we all live. We have to reckon with that *Māyā.* So, in the *Devī Māhātmyam* (1. 55), one of the mystical books dealing with God as Mother, you find this utterance:

Jñāninām apicetāmsi devī bhagavatī hi sā;
Balādākṛṣya mohāya mahāmāyā prayacchati —

Mahāmāyā, that supreme *Māyā,* which is described by ādi Śaṅkarācārya in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (verse 109) as *Mahādbhutā anirvacanīyarūpā,* 'as a great wonder and indeterminable'. It is the echo of this what you get in modern quantum physics as Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty when consciousness is added to it. It is that which drags away even the minds of the *jñānis,* knowledgeable persons. That *Māyā* is the same as the primordial Divine Mother, *ādyā-śakti,* who exercises, as explained by Sri Ramakrishna, two types of *māyāśakti*—one, *avidyā Śakti,* dragging down power, another, *vidyā Śakti,* power which lifts up. We sometimes hear of very highly developed people committing big blunders, because at that moment they came under the power of the *avidyā śakti* of *Māyā.* Very often you find this happening in society. So, the language is 'beware!' Awakening is necessary, alertness of mind is necessary.

We are dealing with so many forces within us, those forces can consume us; let us control them, discipline them, then continue our journey to the highest level of perfection. You keep the mind in a good situation, the senses will carry it to a bad situation. *Indriyas* have that power. So, reckon with it. The *ślokas* coming later, 64 and 67, are going to tell us what we should do then. Shall we remain helpless? No! You can have all your senses working among the sense objects, no need to fear, provided you are a *master,* provided you develop that discipline of these psychic energies within you. If you don't do so, your life will suffer shipwreck in this world. Two great verses are coming immediately after. We are not asked to leave aside our sensory system or the sense objects, but learn how to handle them. Let it not be that you were trying to catch a sensory object, but the sensory object caught you by the neck. That should not be. You should be the master. There is a saying in Hindi, *kambal choḍtā nahī.* Somebody saw in the flood water a blanket-like thing floating. He thought it was a good blanket. He started towards it to obtain it. The people on the bank were waiting; he is not coming back. They said, leave it! No, it doesn't leave me! Come away! I cannot come! Because it was a bear and it had caught hold of him! So, *kambal choḍtā nahī*. 'That *kambal* does not leave me!' That is the story. That is all what Vedanta teaches humanity to achieve as the goal of human evolution—spiritual freedom. Vivekananda says again and again: 'Work like a master, and not like a slave.' If horses draw your carriage to wherever the horses want it to go, you become a helpless victim. You are the rider, but you are not free; don't be so. Therefore, the next *śloka,* 61, says:

तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत मत्पर:।
वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता॥६१॥

Tāni sarvāṇi samyamya yukta āsīta matparaḥ;
Vaśe hi yasyendriyāṇi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā— 2. 61

'The steadfast, having controlled them all, sits focussed on Me as the Supreme; his or her wisdom is steady, whose senses are under control.'

Therefore, *tāni sarvāṇi samyamya,* 'discipline all these sensory energies within you'. Don't leave out even one. If there is one out, that is enough to

destroy you. *Samyama* means ‘disciplining, controlling’. They will remain; we don’t destroy them. We want a very strong sensory system. But they must be under control. Just like in a journey, you want a powerful set of horses. Then only you can reach your destination. But, they must be under your control. Otherwise, it will be the *horse’s* journey, *not yours*! That should not be. So, the verse says, *yukta āsīta matparaḥ*, ‘devoted to *Me*’, remain in this life controlling the psychic and sensory energies’. *Vaśe hi yasyendriyāṇi,* ‘in whose control is the sensory system’ and the energies residing there, *tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā,* ‘his or her wisdom is steady’. What makes for unsteadiness of the mind and the *buddhi,* namely the sensory system, is already overcome. We have to discipline them; that is the beginning of all character training. When children do something wrong, mothers will say, ‘don’t do that’. Why do they tell these do’s and don’ts in the beginning? Because, a certain training is needed of the sensory impulses, when we are young. Till we are able to control them, our parents will help us, must help us. As we grow up, we take up the matter ourselves. We know what to do, what not to do, how far to go; that kind of training we try to give to ourselves. Such a mind which has the power to discipline the enormously powerful sensory system, that mind is certainly going to be very steady.

We start from the sensory system. In fact, take any stone, there is no sensory system there. Only in a living being, there is the sensory system. From the cell onwards up to man, there is this sensory system in simple and complex forms. That sensory system up to the chimpanzee level is controlled by the external world or by the sensory objects. At the human level alone we find a little capacity to say, ‘no’ to a sensory impulse. That ‘no’ must be well developed, strong and steady. What is worth while, I shall pursue, not others. That energy comes only from the spiritual dimension. That is the training that makes for high character and spiritual development. And so, this idea, *vaśe hi yasyendriyāṇi,* ‘in whose control are the senses’, *tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā,* ‘his or her wisdom is well established’. This human body is a dead body. What makes it alive? The sensory energy; that energy makes the body a centre of immense powers; and I have to handle them myself. Nobody else can handle them for me; if I don’t handle them, they will handle me. And we become failures in life. That truth the *Gītā* is

going to say in verses 64 and 67—two wonderful verses. So, here in verse 61, He says, this is how we have to deal with the sensory system. If we don't know how to deal with it, there is every chance of our falling down and down, and becoming completely lost. And it doesn't happen quickly. Step by step, slowly, we slide down. This sliding down is an interesting experience in human life. If you keep a car on a slightly inclined road, that car will start moving down gently if you have not applied the brake; later on, it accelerates and develops high speed and gets destroyed. Similarly, in the human system, there is this tendency to go downwards. The *Gītā* is going to handle that subject in the next two verses; they are very famous verses.

ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते।
सङ्गात् सञ्जायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते॥६२॥

Dhyāyato viṣayānpumsaḥ saṅgasteṣūpajāyate;
Saṅgāt samjāyate kāmaḥ kāmāt krodho'bhijāyate—2. 62

'Thinking of sense objects, attachment to them is formed (in a human being); from attachment rises desire to possess; and from longing, anger emerges.'

क्रोधाद्भवति संमोहः संमोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः।
स्मृतिभ्रंशाद्बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति॥६३॥

Krodhāt bhavati sammohaḥ sammohātsmṛtivibhramaḥ;
Smṛtibhramśāt buddhināśo buddhināśātpraṇaśyati—2. 63

'From anger comes delusion, and from delusion loss of memory. From loss of memory comes the ruin of discriminative power, and from the ruin of discrimination, the person perishes.'

How do we fall down in life? Suppose you visit a prison; you find a young person there who has been arrested and put into the prison. What had the person done? He or she stole something from a shop; that is all. Now study how the person developed this tendency to steal, how he or she finally landed up in the jail. You will find these verses giving the answer. *Dhyāyato viṣayān pumsaḥ.* 'When you go on thinking, over and over again, about the

sensory objects' and finding them very attractive, then what happens? *Saṅgasteṣu upajāyate,* 'mind develops an attachment for them'. 'I like it.' First, I am only seeing it. Then, I have already got glued to it, attached to it. Then what happens? *Saṅgāt samjāyate kāmaḥ,* 'I *must* possess it,' that 'desire begins to come through that attachment'. So, first observing a thing, dwelling on it for long, then *drawn* by it, then the desire to *possess* it. And if people obstruct it, *kāmāt krodho'bhijāyate;* 'anger will come from desire', if anybody obstructs my getting it. Then what happens? *Krodhāt bhavati sammohaḥ,* when *krodha,* or anger, comes, *sammoha,* delusion comes. You forget your surroundings, forget your own individuality, your family background, everything is forgotten in that state. That is why, in psychology it is said, an angry man or woman is mad at the time of his or her anger. Temporary madness is called anger. You lose all bearing at that time. Then what happens? *Krodhāt bhavati sammohaḥ,* 'from that anger you develop delusion', *sammohaḥ.* You have no clear thinking after that. Everything is confused. That is the nature of the mind at that time. Can't see what is what. Then, *sammohāt smṛti vibhramaḥ*, 'through that *sammoha,* you lose your memory', 'who are you?, what are you?', 'what is your background?'. That you are coming from a good family; all that is forgotten. And so, you are now ready to do the evil act at that time. All weakening has taken place; just like when the body is weakened by various diseases, then it can invite all the toxins from outside. It invites them and the body becomes full of evil. Similarly also, the mind. So, this way we finally go down. *Krodhāt bhavati sammohaḥ, sammohāt smṛtivibhramaḥ, smṛtibhramśāt buddhināśo,* when the *smṛti* goes away, memory of our environment, our identity, etc., etc., then *buddhināśa*, 'that discriminative faculty, that reason, which alone can tell you what to do and what not to do, completely goes away'; then what happens? *Buddhināśāt praṇaśyati,* 'you just perish from *buddhināśa*'. Thus, step by step, we go down.

We must know this nature of the mind; then we can fight against it and build up a more healthy and stable personality. So, these two verses tell how even good people do evil things, and suffer various maladies thereafter. In the newspapers I often used to read, while travelling abroad, of thefts in super-bazars. In many countries—in India also we started them now—you can just go in, pick up something, bring it to the counter, pay for it, and go

away. Some people also steal in super-bazars. In America, friends told me that about ten percent of things are stolen, but it being more costly to protect this ten percent, they decided to overlook this ten percent loss. Now somebody enters, a decent person, sometimes a diplomat's relative, who finds something very attractive, and quietly puts it in his or her bag. Sometimes they are caught. And then you can imagine the sorrow for the loss of all that high status. All such situations are revealed by these few *ślokas*. It is good to know these evil possibilities so that we take adequate precaution, strengthen our discriminative faculty, and never allow it to be eroded by the energy coming from the sensory system. The sensory system should be controlled by the *buddhi; buddhi* should not be controlled by the sensory system. A charioteer should not be controlled by the horses; horses must be controlled by the charioteer. That is the language of the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*. And so, after these two verses, you get that verse which I referred to, verse 64. It says:

रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन्।
आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति॥६४॥

Rāgadveṣaviyuktaistu viṣayān indriyaiścaran;
ātmavaśyaiḥ vidheyātmā prasādam adhigacchati— 2. 64

'But the self-controlled person, moving among sense objects with the senses under one's restraint, and free from attraction and aversion, attains to tranquillity.'

The *Gītā* does not want us to leave the sensory world and go to lead an ascetic life in some corner; not at all. Live in the world, live in the midst of sensory objects. There is no harm, but do something to strengthen yourself against the energies that have the tendency to pull you down. So, *rāgadveṣa viyuktaistu,* 'when you give up *rāga* and *dveṣa,* attachment and aversion', *viṣayān indriyaiḥ caran,* 'with your sensory system moving freely among sensory objects'. *Caran* means moving about freely. But, *ātmavaśyaiḥ,* 'by one who is self-possessed'; *vidheyātmā,* 'a person who has achieved self-mastery', *s*uch a person, *prasādam adhigacchati,* 'attains real peace, tranquillity, serenity'. The calm, joyous, free state of mind is called *prasāda.* 'Such a person attains to tranquillity,' *Prasādam adhigacchati.*

When you get *prasāda* of the mind, what happens to you? Today we speak of quality of life. That qualitative enrichment of life comes to you at that stage. The next *śloka* refers to it:

प्रसादे सर्वदु:खानां हानिरस्योपजायते।
प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धि: पर्यवतिष्ठते॥६५॥

Prasāde sarvaduḥkhānām hānirasyopajāyate;
Prasannacetaso hyāśu buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate— 2. 65

'In tranquillity, all sorrows are destroyed. For, the intellect of one who is tranquil-minded is soon established in firmness.'

When *prasāda* or tranquillity comes, 'all sorrows are destroyed', *sarvaduḥkhānām hāni.* I have seen even in ordinary people this steady *buddhi* in the presence of temptation. In the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture in Calcutta, when I was Secretary there in the 1960s, a person living in our International House lost a purse of ten thousand rupees, or rather left it in the room along with his air ticket and passport, and went away to Delhi. Going there, he found everything gone. Then he phoned to me at Calcutta. What happened? The worker who looks after the room found all this lying there—a purse of ten thousand rupees and the tickets. See the greatness of that employee who was getting a small salary of about Rs. 700 a month; yet he quietly brought these to the office, 'this person has suffered, he has left it, and you must restore it to him'. He could have easily taken that money; he also was in need; but, no! He had another way of looking at things. Such a way of looking at things is getting less and less. What is the cause? The sensory system is very very powerful, and the controlling *buddhi* is weak. The capacity to feel and respond to another person's problem as one's own is a spiritual capacity. That capacity can come to all people. But sometimes the high in society may not have it. In India, we have now two types of poor people—the poor and the poverty-stricken, namely, the rich. The latter have much but they always want and seek more and more through corrupt practices; they cannot manifest this *buddhi,* which is a spiritual quality and doesn't depend upon social status. Any human being can achieve this quality. So, *prasanna cetaso hyāśu buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate*, 'the buddhi of a person with tranquil mind soon

becomes steady'. This is the important statement in this section; verses 64, 65 go together. When we now go to verse 67, we will find the opposite of it. When this quality of *ātmavaśyaiḥ vidheyātmā* is not there, people collapse morally. In these matters each one must help oneself. These are all human achievements. Instead of striving for going to an unknown heaven in the sky, why not be a decent human being here on earth and realize the infinite Atman hidden within you?

Don't be a creature; be free; is the supreme message of Vedanta to all humanity. In several verses this is stressed again and again. This discipline at the sensory level is what makes for *yoga;* remaining at the stage of sense pleasure makes for *bhoga.* We all begin with *bhoga,* but Vedanta and the science of human possibilities tells us not to continue at the *bhoga* level all the time. It tells humanity to rise slowly to the *yoga* level. Sri Ramakrishna puts the subject in a beautiful way; if you don't rise from *bhoga* to *yoga,* you will be in *roga*, i.e., all sorts of mental and nervous ailments, and social tensions will come to you. He also speaks of three levels of *ānanda* or bliss available to all; *viṣayṣananda,* sensual joy, *bhajanānanda,* joy arising from singing hymns and *bhajans*, and *brahmānanda,* joy arising from realising our infinite and immortal nature as Brahman. So, march on; don't stay at the sensory level. The child lives entirely at the sensory level. But as it grows older, it can get intimations of something higher. 'Let me go towards that'. That means a little discipline of the sensory system. Even to become a law-abiding citizen, you need a little control of the sensory system. Even to be a member of a healthy society, you need a little control over the sensory system. This is what is insisted upon by the *Gītā*, not as an end in itself. In the very first *śloka* in this section, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa started expounding the nature of the *sthitaprajña,* he said that it is not that you drive away all sensory attractions, and make the mind empty. That doesn't make a man a *sthitaprajña.* Mind must also be yoked to the Atman that is within. Realize your own infinite nature, beyond the sensory level. Then, he or she is a *sthitaprajña.* A mere negative ascetic attitude is never respected nor presented in Vedanta literature. It must be something which gives you joy. If the sensory system gives you joy, what lies above the sensory system will give you a million times more joy. That is the language used in the Upaniṣads. In the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad,* while discussing the subject of

enquiry into the nature of Bliss, it is said that joys of men on earth, gods in heaven, and every other type of joy are only a fraction of the joy of the Atman, the infinite nature of one and all. And therefore, these two verses give us the freedom to live in this world, to work in this world, and to enjoy bliss in this world at various levels. The *Gītā* stresses that point. The next verse, 66, tells us:

नास्ति बुद्धिरयुक्तस्य न चायुक्तस्य भावना।
न चाभावयतः शान्तिरशान्तस्य कुतः सुखम्॥६६॥

Nāsti buddhirayuktasya na cāyuktasya bhāvanā;
Na cābhāvayataḥ śāntiḥ aśāntasya kutaḥ sukham— 2. 66

'No knowledge (of the Self) has the unsteady. Nor has he or she meditation; to the unmeditative there is no peace, and how can one without peace have happiness?'

Step by step. What a profound depth psychology you get here! It is not some dogma or theory which you may just believe and go away; examine for yourself, is it true? Study your own mind, your own reactions. So, the verse says, *nāsti buddhirayuktasya*, 'to the *ayukta,* there is no *buddhi*'. That *buddhi* by which we have to achieve a stable life and realize the true freedom within ourselves, that *buddhi* cannot come without this *yukti,* 'discipline at the sensory level'. The *buddhi* yoked to the Atman, the *buddhi* that can get pulsations of the Atman itself, 'that *buddhi* cannot come without this prior self-discipline at the sensory level'. That is the first statement; *nacāyuktasya bhāvanā,* 'without this sensory discipline, no meditation is possible'. *Bhāvanā* is a word for 'meditation'. It also means spiritual imagination—imagination which is able to catch the radiations from the spiritual dimension of the human personality. That is a wonderful quality—the capacity for imagination. Here it means that type of meditation by which we are able to stabilize our system and get a glimpse of something beyond the sensory level. *Na cābhāvayataḥ śāntiḥ,* 'without that meditative mind there can be no *śānti*, or peace of mind'. Today, we deal with tension and stress in our daily life, in our highly industrialized civilization. And everybody is eager to get rid of this tension because, with that stress and tension, you won't enjoy life or even your work. You are a mere creature of

the environment in which you are working. Therefore, that meditative state, where you are perfectly at peace with yourself, that state cannot come without this kind of disciplining of the sensory energy system below. And lastly, *aśāntasya kutaḥ sukham?* What a beautiful expression! 'Without that *śānti,* where is happiness?' Mind is constantly in a disturbed condition. Then where is happiness? Happiness is a wonderful state. You are serene, you are calm, you are fulfilled, then only happiness comes. Therefore, if happiness is the objective, you have to handle this mind; to handle the mind, you have to handle the sensory system which is below the mind; then a disciplined inner life sets in.

An agnostic thinker like Bertrand Russell, in the last chapter of his book on *The Conquest of Happiness,* says that you can get happiness when you have three integrations achieved in your life: 'integration between you and society; integration with the nature outside; integration within your own mind'. *ātmavaśyaiḥ vidheyātmā*, 'if you are perfectly self-restrained with tremendous discipline within', you can freely move about the sense objects. Otherwise, it will be a tragedy of human life which the next verse, verse 67, expounds. You can study all the various tragedies in literature, from the Greek tragedies to our own *Mahābhārata,* in which you see tragedy from beginning to end. So also in Shakespeare and Goethe. We see tragedy everywhere around us. Now, this tragedy of human life is put into one verse here. Why does this tragedy take place? Some discipline is lacking in the human being or beings concerned. That is put in a beautiful language.

इन्द्रियाणां हि चरतां यन्मनोऽनुविधीयते।
तदस्य हरति प्रज्ञां वायुर्नावमिवाम्भसि॥६७॥

Indriyāṇām hi caratām yanmano'nuvidhīyate;
Tadasya harati prajñām vāyurnāvamivāmbhasi— 2. 67

'For, the mind, which follows in the wake of the wandering senses, carries away his or her discrimination, as a wind (carries away from its course) a ship on the waters.'

The sense organs are being carried away by the sense objects. And 'the mind also follows in the wake of the sensory system towards the sensory

objects', *indriyāṇām hi caratām yanmano-anuvidhīyate;* when the mind does like that, what happens to the human being? *Tadasya harati prajñām*, 'that destroys whatever little wisdom one has in one's life'. And what is the example? *Vāyurnāvam iva ambhasi,* 'like a ship being carried away by wind in the sea'. That is tragedy, and all types of tragedy have this common characteristic of losing control and being overwhelmed by forces around you. Tragedy is beautiful when depicted on the stage; it is dangerous if depicted in one's own life. What you see as tragedy must purge you of the evil so that you become free from tragic situations; they call this the cathartic theory of tragedy. You see a tragedy, you develop a catharsis—catharsis is the word for purgative. A mental purgative you get, by seeing a tragedy. Then, it is hoped that you don't commit that tragedy again. But, unfortunately, people see a tragedy, and re-enact it in one's own life. That is the bigger tragedy. That tragedy should not be.

In many of world's literature, this human tragedy, which takes place everywhere, every day, has been depicted, and one author has depicted it very beautifully. That is the German dramatist and poet, Goethe, in his book *The Faust*. Faust is the main character in that book. In chapter 14 or so, there is a section called 'Faust's soliloquy in the woods'. Sitting in the forest, he is speaking to himself in a calm quiet way. What has happened to me, he is thinking. Then comes this famous passage:

> 'Oh, for the broken state of man: I know
> Our unfulfilment now! Thou gavest bliss
> Which brings me near and nearer to the gods,
> And gavest, too, the dark companion whom
> I cannot rid me of, though with his scorn
> He breaks my pride, and in a single word,
> A breath, turns all thy gifts and makes them nothing.
> He builds a wildfire in my heart, a blase,
> Till from desire I stumble to possession,
> And in possession languish from desire.'

That is called the tragedy of human life. 'From desire I stumble to possession, and in possession languish from desire.' This is the broken state of man. Can any philosophy help me not to get into this tragic situation?

That is the philosophy that the *Gītā* presents, not to a sect or creed or nation, but to humanity at large. The totality of life must prove to be a success. That needs the guidance from a scientific philosophy of life. Two pictures we must keep before ourselves: do I want my life to be destroyed? Do I want to suffer shipwreck in life? Or, do I want to ride high this life with joy and peace? That is my question to myself, and I must find the answer. This is how the *Gītā* initiates that struggle for a higher life in every individual, giving hints and suggestions how we can be successful, but asking the person to do it oneself. Nobody else can do it for you; there is no proxy that can do it for you. In the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi,* verse 51, Śaṅkarācārya particularly mentions it. He says:

Ìṇamocana kartāraḥ pituḥ santi sutādayaḥ;
Bandha mocana kartā tu svasmādanyo na kaścana —

'If a father has debts, a son or others can clear them on his behalf; but, if the father is in bondage, none other than oneself can remove that bondage.' Another verse (52) says: 'if there is a heavy load on my head, *mastaka-nyasta bhāra,* somebody can come and remove it from my head and release me.' *Kṣudhādhikṛta duḥkham tu vinā svena na kenacit,* 'but if one is hungry, one must eat for oneself and not someone else.' Therefore,

Vastu svarūpam sphuṭabodha cakṣuṣā
svenaiva vedyam na tu paṇḍitena;
Candra svarūpam nija cakṣuṣaiva
jṇātavyam anyair avagamyate kim—

What a wonderful verse!

'The nature of truth', *vastu-svarūpam, vastu* is a very rich technical word in Vedanta. Any existing thing is called *vastu.* That table, it is a *vastu,* similarly, the Atman is a *vastu.* Brahman is *vastu;* they are all existing realities. One is sensory, the other is super-sensory. How do you know *vastu-svarūpam*? *Sphuṭabodha cakṣuṣā svenaiva vedyam*, 'you must realize it for yourself by developing the clear eye of reason'. *Bodha-cakṣu,* 'the eye of understanding, the eye of reason'; *sphuṭa* means clear; *svenaiva vedyam,* 'must be known by oneself'; *na tu paṇḍitena,* 'but not by a scholar on your behalf'. Then comes the example: *Candra svarūpam nija cakṣuṣāiva*

jṇātavyam anyairavagamyate kim?, 'the beautiful form of the full-moon, you must see with your own eyes; how can somebody else see it on your behalf?' This is the constant stress in Vedanta. Developing awareness in ourselves, higher and higher. That is the way of spiritual development and fulfilment. The *Gītā* is the science and technique of that human development: from creatureliness to freedom, from creatureliness to blessedness. And then, therefore, the next *śloka,* 68, says:

तस्माद्यस्य महाबाहो निगृहीतानि सर्वशः।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता॥६८॥

Tasmādyasya mahābāho nigṛhītāni sarvaśaḥ;
Indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyaḥ tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā—2. 68

'Therefore, O mighty-armed, his or her knowledge is steady, whose senses are completely restrained from their objects.'

Tasmāt, 'therefore,' if this is true, what follows? *Yasya indiryāṇi indriyārthebhyaḥ nigṛhītāni sarvaśaḥ,* 'whose sense organs have been brought perfectly under control from all sides'. To be a citizen of a free country, you need a measure of self-discipline; without that, there cannot be citizenship at all. And ethical values, all higher values, come from this discipline of the sensory energy system. The sense organs and the sense objects have an affinity for each other. But I am here to see that they don't do what *they* want to do. I want them to do what *I* want them to do. That truth will be presented again in the third chapter in a little more detail. *Tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā,* 'that person's *prajñā*, wisdom, is steady'. Having said this, the *Gītā* gives you a remarkable idea which you find in many of Tao's teachings in China. Says verse 69:

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी।
यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः॥६९॥

Yā niśā sarvabhūtānām tasyām jāgarti samyamī;
Yasyām jāgrati bhūtāni sā niśā paśyato muneḥ—2. 69

'That which is night to all beings, in that the self-controlled wakes. That in which all beings are awake, is night to the Self-seeing *muni.*'

The word *niśā* means in Sanskrit ‘sleep’, or ‘night’. Then *jāgarti,* means ‘awake’. So, this *śloka* presents an interesting paradox: *Yā niśā sarvabhūtānām*, ‘that aspect of reality which is treated as darkness by all beings’, the *yogī* perceives intense light there, and *yasyām jāgrati bhūtāni sā niśā paśyato muneḥ,* ‘that aspect of reality where people see plenty of light, the *yogī* sees only darkness there’. This is the comparison between the two. What is *niśā* to one, is not *niśā* to the other; it is *jāgrat* to the other. The reverse also is true. The *yogī* realizes the Atman and does not run after wealth and pleasure and power. However, the worldly person finds no interest in higher things; rather he or she feels happy when one goes and says, ‘I will run after money driven by greed, and even cheat people, use violence’. The *yogī* sees nothing but darkness there.

A child plays with toys; it is its intense pleasure. But the parents are not interested in the toys. They have got other ‘toys’ to play with. When we play as children, we are so absorbed in the play; that is our everything at the time; I remember, as a boy, when we played football, even when night had fallen and we could not see the ball, still every one of us continued the play; it was the most important thing for our life at that stage. This is the nature of human life; we go from one pleasure to another pleasure, and to still higher pleasures. So, Vedanta says that there are various dimensions of joy; we have to seek them one after the other; don’t get stuck up at any particular level. No level is condemned; every level has its own value. But, march on, march on, march on; that is the supreme word of Vedanta. *Caraiveti, caraiveti,* ‘march on’, says the *Yajur-Veda*; don’t stagnate at one particular level.

Whenever civilizations stagnate at the sensory level, they decay and die away. Sri Ramakrishna said in a beautiful parable, *egiye jāo, egiye jāo.* In Bengali *egiye jāo* means *āge baḍo* in Hindi*,* march onward. A woodcutter used to cut wood going to a forest, a small quantity, and sell it in the market, and make his living; he went on thus for a long time; one day a holy man passed that way. He saw the woodcutter doing this. He simply told the woodcutter, ‘march on, *egiye jāo’.* At first the woodcutter didn’t take it seriously. But, one day the thought came, I am just cutting wood here. That holy man told me to go onward. Why not try it? He went a little deeper into the forest; he got more high quality wood there, and got more money; then

he said, why should I stop here? Why not go still deeper? Then he came across a copper mine, then a gold mine, and finally a diamond mine; he became immensely rich. That is Sri Ramakrishna's parable of *egiye jāo*. So, spiritual life also is like this. *Egiye jāo, egiye jāo,* greater experiences are waiting for you; there is a spiritual maturity waiting for all people. Then comes a tremendous statement. What is the nature of that mind, that is undisturbed, that cannot be shaken by all these various pressures going on around? The only way the *Gītā* would express it is through a remarkable illustration given in the next verse:

आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं
समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत्।
तद्वत्कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे
स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी॥७०॥

āpūryamāṇamacalapratiṣṭham
samudramāpaḥ praviśanti yadvat;
Tadvatkāmā yam praviśanti sarve
sa śāntimāpnoti na kāmakāmī — 2. 70

'As into the ocean, brimful and still, flow the (flood) waters (of various rivers without agitating the ocean), even so is the *muni* into whom enter all desires; he or she attains to peace, and not the desirer of desires.'

A person who runs after various desires and sensory cravings, that is one type; another person is one into whom so many cravings are going, but they do not make any disturbance inside, which is absolutely calm and steady. One's desires, others' desires, all enter into that person creating no agitation at all. What is the nature of that mind? It is like a big ocean, *āpūryamāṇam acalapratiṣṭham samudram; samudra,* 'the ocean'; *āpūryamāṇam,* 'full to the brim'; and *acalapratiṣṭham,* 'unshaken like a mountain'; *āpaḥ praviśanti,* 'enter waters'; *tadvat,* 'similarly'; *kāmā yam praviśanti sarve,* 'into whom enter all desires (without agitating the person)'; *sa śāntim āpnoti,* 'he or she attains peace'; *na kāmakāmī,* 'and not the desirer of desires'. In the Buddhist language they say, *bodhicittam,* the *cittam*, or mind, of a Buddha. *Bodhicitta* is a wonderful *citta.* Anything and

everything can enter there without disturbing the peace of that *citta* or mind. So, this *śloka* refers to that human being who has established tremendous strength and stability within oneself, and all these various attractions around do not make any difference to him or her; the person is absolutely calm and steady, 'not agitated, like an immense lake', *mahāhṛdavat akṣo'bhyamānaḥ,* as expressed by Śaṅkarācārya in his *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* sloka-in-eng-last-line. So, this particular *śloka* refers to that fullness one has achieved. And so,

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान्पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति॥७१॥

Vihāya kāmānyaḥ sarvānpumāmścarati nispṛhaḥ;
Nirmamo nirahamkāraḥ sa śāntimadhigacchati— 2. 71

'That person who lives devoid of sensual longing, free from all desires, without the sense of "I" and "*mine",* he or she attains peace.'

'I' and 'mine' makes for that craving. If I feel my oneness with you, my craving to that extent becomes less. I then want to satisfy your craving. That is why in a healthy society, we will have a disciplined type of mind. I don't want to get everything at the cost of others. I will work for others also. There, morality comes, ethics comes. *Sa śāntim adhigacchati,* 'he or she attains peace'. In the other case, nothing but greed remains.

Earlier I had referred to the story of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (11. 7. 29), where King Yadu comes across a young wandering ascetic, calm and self-possessed; the king puts a question to that ascetic, how he, in the fullness of youth, could attain this inner peace, 'when others are burnt by various desires', *janeṣu dagdhamāneṣu.* It shows that this is not a theory or dogma but a fact of experience.

Now, comes the last *śloka*, 72, of this chapter of the *Gītā*. That *śloka* proclaims the goal of human evolution attainable in this world, in this very human body:

एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ नैनां प्राप्य विमुह्यति।
स्थित्वाऽस्यामन्तकालेऽपि ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृच्छति॥७२॥

Eṣā brāhmī sthitiḥ pārtha nainām prāpya vimuhyati;
Sthitvā'syāmantakāle'pi brahmanirvāṇamṛcchati—2. 72

'This (*sthitaprajña* state) is having one's being in Brahman, *brāhmī sthitiḥ*, none, O son of Pṛthā, attaining to this, becomes deluded. Being established therein, even at the end of one's life, one attains to oneness with Brahman.'

Eṣā, 'this', showing with the hand, *brāhmīsthitiḥ pārtha,* 'Arjuna, this is called *brāhmī sthitiḥ*, getting established in Brahman', the ultimate and the intimate reality; *nainām prāpya vimuhyati,* 'once you achieve this, never again can delusion overpower you'. *Sthitvā asyām antakāle api brahmanirvāṇam ṛcchati,* 'if you achieve this even at the end of your life, even then you achieve *brahmanirvāṇam, nirvāṇa* in Brahman, becoming one with Brahman', in this very earth and not in any heaven; if one couldn't achieve this when young, one can achieve it in old age before the fall of the body by slowly developing enough spiritual strength. *Sthitvā'syāmantakāle'pi,* 'even attaining this just before death', *brahmanirvāṇamṛcchati,* 'you will achieve oneness with Brahman'.

Śaṅkarācārya's comment upon this is very inspiring: 'if you achieve it just before death, it is wonderful; but how much more wonderful will it be if you had got it earlier, as a youth and lived under its inspiration!'

That is the message which the second chapter gives to every one of us. It is a rational message, a practical message, a universal message. We can, all of us, have this attitude developed within ourselves, and this achievement we can have in this very life. That is the teaching of the *Gītā*.

We have completed the second chapter today. We shall next enter the third chapter known as *Karma Yoga.* This chapter expounds some doubts and their clearance; and such doubts are Arjuna's as well as yours and mine. Chapters two and three constitute the exposition of the philosophy and practical spirituality of *yoga,* and the fourth chapter will tell us that this *yoga* expounds the spirituality of the whole of life, not just life during your prayer times. 'You are spiritual' means, you are aware of your spiritual nature in the context of your life and work. In society, most people are householders, who have jobs to do, social responsibilities to bear, and

children to look after; they can't be lying on a couch or somewhere in some mystical trance experience; they will be spiritual in the very context of their life and work. Where there is work, you need to pay attention to that work. That is how the *Gītā* puts the message of *yoga* before us to make our working life deeply spiritual, emphasizing that spirituality is everyone's birthright. The infinite and immortal Atman or Brahman is our true nature.

Here is a description of the profound and subtle truths of the Atman discovered by the ancient Upaniṣads whose echoes you will find in modern Quantum and Particle Physics. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says (I. ii. 20–21):

Aṇoraṇīyān mahato mahīyān
ātmā'sya jantor nihito guhāyām;
Tam akratuḥ paśyati vītaśoko
dhātuḥprasādāt mahimānam ātmanaḥ —

'The Atman is smaller than an atom and larger than *mahat* or the cosmos; It is present in the cavity of the heart of all beings as their Self; Its glory is realized by the person who has renounced all desires and has gained full control over the mind and sense organs; he or she then becomes free from all sorrow.'

āsīno dūram vrajati śayāno yāti sarvataḥ;

'Though sitting, this Atman goes far, though lying, It travels everywhere.'

Professor Fritjof Capra, the author of *The Tao of Physics*, in his third book *Uncommon Wisdom*, refers to his conversations with Werner Heisenberg, the great discoverer of the Principle of Uncertainty in Quantum Physics which replaced the strongly-held Newtonian causality principle (pp. 42–43):

'When I asked Heisenberg about his own thoughts on Eastern Philosophy, he told me to my great surprise not only that he had been well aware of the parallels between Quantum Physics and Eastern thought, but also that his own scientific work had been influenced, at least at the sub-conscious level, by Indian Philosophy.

‘In 1929, Heisenberg spent some time in India as the guest of the celebrated poet Rabindranath Tagore with whom he had long conversations about science and Indian Philosophy. This introduction to Indian thought brought Heisenberg great comfort, he told me. He began to see that the recognition of relativity, interconnectedness, and impermanence as fundamental aspects of physical reality, which had been so difficult for himself and his fellow physicists, was the very basis of the Indian spiritual traditions. “After these conversations with Tagore”, he said, “some of the ideas that had seemed so crazy suddenly made much more sense. That was a great help for me.”’

Prajñānam brahma, ‘Brahman is Pure Consciousness,’ says the *Aitareya Upaniṣad; ayamātmā brahma,* ‘this Self (in human beings) is Brahman,’ says the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad.* The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* says that this Atman is the Light of all lights (II. ii. 15) which is echoed in the *New Testament* as ‘the Light that lighteth every soul that cometh into the world’:

Na tatra sūryo bhāti na candra tārakam
Nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto’yam agniḥ;
Tam eva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam
Tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti —

‘The sun does not shine there (in the Atman), nor the moon and stars; neither these lightnings shine there, what to speak of the fire (in our households); when It itself shines, all other things shine; by Its light all this manifested universe is lighted.’

This truth of Brahman, as the one source of the many, illumines the whole manifested universe, says the last verse of chapter 2 of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* in a joyous proclamation (II. ii. 11):

Brahmaivedam amṛtam purastāt brahma
paścāt brahma dakṣiṇataścottareṇa;
Adhaścordhvam ca prasṛtam
brahmaivedam viśvam idam variṣṭham —

‘This whole manifested universe is only the immortal Brahman; in front is Brahman, behind is Brahman, right side and left side is Brahman; It is

spread below and above; this manifested univese is only this adorable Brahman.'

This great science of *yoga* which is practical Vedanta, and expounded for the first time in the second and third chapters of the *Gītā,* will be strengthened and nourished further by other ideas coming in other chapters hereafter.

I wish to point out two truths here before entering the third chapter. The first is that there is repetition of spiritual truths in the *Gītā*and, naturally, in this exposition also. Repetition is considered as a fault in literature. But, in his commentary on the Upaniṣads, Śaṅkarācārya quotes this statement of India's ancient *Mīmāmsā* philosophers that 'repetition is not a fault in the conveying of spiritual truths', *na mantrāṇām jāmitā asti.* They are difficult to grasp and retain, and hence, repetition helps.

The second is the importance of this last verse, and similar other statements in the *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads, in the context of modern biological view of human evolution, that spiritual realization is the goal of human life and that it can be had *here and now,* and not in an imaginary post-mortem heaven.

Modern biology accepts the uniqueness of the human being, and is facing problems dealing with understanding the goal of human evolution and how to reach it. Let me put it in the late eminent biologist Sir Julian Huxley's own words as given in the last two pages of the main part of his own latest book, *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis,* which I like much for its truthfulness and clarity and boldness. He wrote to me a letter after reading my book, *The Message of the Upaniṣads,* which, and my detailed reply, are now included in the Appendix of *The Message of the Upaniṣads* (pp. 571–72):

'I agree that the Upaniṣads are remarkable achievements considering the date of their composition. …

'In my *Essays of A Humanist* and in my book on *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis,* I have tried to set forth the modes, methods, and main trends of evolution in its various aspects.'

Huxley cites several conditions for determining the process and goal of human evolution in his second book:

One: 'it should not be a standstill or a degeneration.' On this subject, India's Vedanta teaches that life, being a journey to fulfilment, should not be allowed to stagnate at any stage; this is expressed by the clarion call of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* chapter 3, freely rendered by Swami Vivekananda as 'Arise! Awake! and stop not till the goal is reached.'

Again, 'And this human purpose can only be formulated in terms of the new attributes achieved by life in becoming human.'

Vedanta developed the concept of the four *puruṣārthas,* 'purposes sought after by a human being' in response to this demand.

Again, 'Man as we had stressed is, in many respects, unique among animals; his purposes must take account of his unique features as well as those he shares with other life.'

This also is emphasized in the above teaching of the four *puruṣārthas;* it has special reference to the last *puruṣārtha,* namely, *mokṣa* or spiritual liberation, about which modern biology knows nothing. Huxley continues (*ibid*., p. 577):

'Obviously, the formulation of an agreed purpose for man as a whole will not be easy.'

To this, Vedanta will firmly say that it will make it easy, and it has made it easy, by formulating a science of human possibilities, a science of human being in depth, long long ago. Out of that we can get all the ingredients for a full science of human evolution, the goal of this evolution as well as its stages and steps. Vedanta has already formulated the truth that the *science of values is the link between the physical sciences and the science of spirituality.*

Huxley continues: 'There have been many attempts already. Today we are experiencing the struggle between two opposed ideas, that of subordination of the individual to the community, and that of his intrinsic superiority.'

Vedanta accepts both; at certain levels, the community has a voice; at certain other levels, it has no voice, the individual is supreme.

Then Huxley says: 'Another struggle still in progress is between the idea of a purpose directed to a future life in a supernatural world, and one directed to progress in this existing world. Until such major conflicts are resolved, humanity can have no single major purpose, and progress can be but fitful and slow.'

Huxley, and most Western thinkers, and many modern Indian thinkers as well, do not know that Vedanta blew off the conflict between this world and a supernatural world long long ago in the Upaniṣads and in this *Bhagavad Gītā.* In all of them, spiritual realization and life fulfilment are conveyed in firm language as one profound experience to be attained *here* and *now,* in this very world, in this very body. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* used strong language against the desire to go to a supernatural heaven (I. ii. 10):

Iṣṭāpūrtam manyamānā variṣṭham
nānyat śreyo vedayante pramūḍhāḥ;
Nākasya pṛṣṭhe te sukṛte'nubhūtva
imam lokam hīnataram vā viśanti —

'Utter fools are they who think that they will do some ritual and attain *puṇya* or merit here and enjoy it in the highest heaven, and they think that there is nothing better; but, having enjoyed pleasure in heaven, when their merit is exhausted, they come back to this human world or even go down to lower levels.'

The same idea is found in the *Gītā* also (5. 19):

Ihaiva tairjitaḥ sargo yeṣām sāmye sthitam manaḥ;
Nirdoṣam hi samam brahma tasmāt brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ —

'Here itself (in this very world) they have conquered relative worldly existence, whose mind is established in *sāmya,* sameness or unity; for, Brahman is verily devoid of all evil and is the same in all; therefore, such persons are established in Brahman.'

Huxley says further: 'Until such major conflicts are resolved, humanity can have no single major purpose.'

I have discussed this subject more elaborately in my book, *Practical Vedanta and the Science of Values,* published by Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 14.

When Vedantic ideas spread throughout the world in the modern age, thinkers in various parts of the world will understand: Yes, here is a major purpose for all humanity, as given in the last verse of the second chapter, to be pursued according to one's capacity; and thinkers like Huxley *of that period* will say: Yes, now we have discovered a common purpose for human evolution, namely, to realize Brahman or Atman, the infinite and non-dual source of all evolution, for which evolution has fitted the human being with the necessary organic capacity; the human being is, therefore, 'having the capacity to realize Brahman'. *Brahmāvaloka dhiṣaṇām*, as the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* expresses it. Śaṅkarācārya refers to this realization by a human being, in a human being's lifetime, to be the *source* of the whole universe, and contrasts it, in his *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* sloka-in-eng-last-line, to the Indian *paurāṇika* view of the universe merging into Brahman at the time of cosmic dissolution or *pralaya;* modern Western astronomy also holds the same view that eventually, after billions of years, the whole universe will contract and attain the *state of singularity* (since it does not accept yet the principle of intelligence).

It is interesting to find that, in his commentary on the *Viṣṇusahasranāma,* verse 19, of the *Mahābhārata,* Śaṅkarācārya comments on the word *tvaṣṭa,* the fifty-second name of Viṣṇu, as 'the energy that contracts the universe, *tanūkṛtam,* at the time of *pralaya* or cosmic dissolution.'

इति सांख्ययोगो नाम द्वितीयोऽध्यायः ।

Iti sāṅkhyayogo nāma dvitīyo'dhyāyaḥ —

'Thus, the end of the second chapter designated as Sāṅkhya and Yoga.'

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 3

Karma-Yoga
The Yoga of Action

We completed the study of the second chapter of the *Gītā*, especially the last few verses dealing with the philosophy of *yoga* and ending with the nature of the *Sthitaprajña,* a person of steady wisdom. And the whole section ended with the statement in the last verse: *Eṣā brāhmī sthitiḥ pārtha,* 'Arjuna, this is the *brāhmī sthitiḥ,* 'the state of being established in Brahman, the ultimate reality', *nainām prāpya vimuhyati,* 'if you are established in it, you will never again come into delusion'. *Sthitvāsyām-antakāle'pi,* 'even if you are established in it just before the time of death', *brahmanirvāṇam ṛcchati,* 'you achieve *nirvāṇa* in Brahman, complete absorption in Brahman'.

On several occasions during these weeks I have said that, a steady mind, a strong mind, is the greatest asset that we can have in life. A flimsy mind, shaken by every passing fancy, will not be helpful for a fulfilled life. So, the training of the mind is the greatest work we have to do, whether it is for worldly life or higher life. Make the mind your friend, that is what the *Gītā* will say in the fifth and sixth *ślokas* of the sixth chapter; don't make it your enemy. Very often our mind is our own enemy and we suffer thereby. The whole of education and religion, and all inter-human relationships, have only this objective: how to make this mind strong, steady, and an instrument for the fulfilment of life. So the second chapter ended with that high note, *and it was emphasized that this was a state to be realized here and now,* not in some faraway heaven. That idea needs to be expressed again and again. And this is the best thing we can do: a thoroughly disciplined life, a mind which is friendly to our own aspirations, and to train that kind of a mind, so that this life will be fulfilled.

In Vedantic thinking, the next life or rebirth comes only when I am unable to fulfil my life's purposes in this very life. Then Vedanta will say,

all right, you will get another opportunity. That will find mention in the sixth chapter. But, the best thing is to use this very life to achieve the best in this life itself; *ihaiva, ihaiva,* 'here itself'; *Gītā* will say later on in chapter 5, *śloka* 19. This is a special emphasis. Along with that emphasis comes the emphasis on the training of the mind and developing ethical and moral values by which alone this achievement can be had in this life. A mere life of ritual and ceremony will have no meaning if *this* is the ideal; that what we want to achieve is to be achieved here and now, not at some place or time far away. So, we enter the third chapter where Arjuna gets an opportunity to put a question, and as I said last Sunday, most of these questions, you will find, are our own questions. We also feel like questioning on this particular matter. And so, sometimes Arjuna questions, sometimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa, *assuming a question,* gives the answer. That is how you begin the third chapter with Arjuna's question in two verses.

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca—

'Arjuna said:'

ज्यायसी चेत्कर्मणस्ते मता बुद्धिर्जनार्दन।
तत्किं कर्मणि घोरे मां नियोजयसि केशव॥१॥

Jyāyasī cetkarmaṇaste matā buddhiḥ janārdana;
Tat kim karmaṇi ghore mām niyojayasi keśava — 3. 1

'If, O Janārdana (Kṛṣṇa), according to you knowledge is superior to action, why then, O Keśava, do You engage me in this terrible action?'

O Kṛṣṇa, if you think that thought is superior to action, that *yoga-buddhi* which he referred to in the last chapter, verse 49, where Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said, 'develop *yoga-buddhi*'; if You think so, 'why do you ask me to engage myself in this terrible action?' *Tat kim karmaṇi ghore mām niyojayasi keśava?* I shall develop a *yoga-buddhi.* Why ask me to get into this mess of a war? A very relevant question. Then he explains his question further.

व्यामिश्रेणेव वाक्येन बुद्धिं मोहयसीव मे।
तदेकं वद निश्चित्य येन श्रेयोऽहमाप्नुयाम्॥२॥

Vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena buddhim mohayasīva me;
Tadekam vada niścitya yena śreyo'hamāpnuyām— 3. 2

'With these seemingly conflicting words, You are, as it were, bewildering my understanding; tell me that one thing for certain, by which I can attain to the Highest.'

'By confusing words as it were', you are deluding my mind. *Vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena,* sentences containing mixed-up ideas. And their effect is to confuse my mind, to delude it. *Tad ekam vada niścitya,* 'tell me for certain that one path', which you consider as good for me, *yena śreyo'ham āpnuyām,* 'by which I can attain my welfare'. This is Arjuna's request. We saw in the 49th verse in the last chapter, *dūreṇa hyavaram karma buddhiyogāt dhanañjaya,* 'these ordinary actions that we do are far inferior to that *buddhi-yoga';* therefore, *buddhau śaraṇam anviccha,* 'take refuge in *buddhi*.' So, Arjuna is taking it up: I shall develop *buddhi,* I shall develop this attitude; why should I work? Why should I waste my energy in this work, especially, in this terrible work, like a war? That is the question. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives the answer in this and the next chapters.

This subject that comes up so often in the *Gītā* is something that has worried our Indian minds for hundreds of years. *Action versus inaction*. This subject comes again and again in our religious literature. Why should I act? Why not keep quiet? After all, the Atman is absolutely inactive. If I want to be the Atman, I should be inactive; so this theory of inaction had a tremendous appeal to the Indian mind. Why should I work? And that developed in such a way that more and more laziness came upon the people! Because of this tradition of thinking, this *naiṣkarmya* or actionlessness dominated the Indian mind for centuries; it was strengthened for sannyasins by an important Vedantic book, *Naiṣkarmyasiddhiḥ, Attainment Through Non-action.* That *naiṣkarmya* attitude slowly invaded the minds of the householders also; and it ruined the nation when its meaning was not correctly understood. Śrī Kṛṣṇa had taken up this subject of 'action versus inaction' in the *Gītā*; but it is only in the modern period

that the *Gītā* is being correctly understood through the powerful teachings of practical Vedanta by Swami Vivekananda. The teaching that action becomes inaction by a true spiritual method comes in the *Gītā* in the fourth chapter, *śloka* 18; in this chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is dealing with the subject of action and inaction, and He stresses the importance of action, as you will see in the various verses that we shall be studying.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is called *Śrī bhagavān* in the *Mahābhārata* and other literature, 'That Supreme Bhagavān' said:

लोकेऽस्मिन्द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयानघ।
ज्ञानयोगेन सांख्यानां कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम्॥३॥

Loke'smin dvividhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayā'nagha;
Jñānayogena sāṅkhyānām karmayogena yoginām —3. 3

'In the beginning (of creation), O sinless one, the twofold path was given by Me to this world—the path of knowledge for the *Sāṅkhyas*, and the path of work for the *yogīs*.' In the middle of the second chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, after speaking about the Atman which is inactive, which is ever free, ever pure, etc., said, '*Eṣā te'bhihitā sāṅkhye buddhiryoge tvimām śṛṇu,* 'till now I spoke to you about the *buddhi* devoted to *sāṅkhya,* that life of inaction and inward meditation. Now listen to me when I speak to you about the path of *yoga* based on *buddhi'*. If the path of *jñāna* takes one to the highest *mokṣa,* the path of *karma* also will take one to the highest *mokṣa.* These are the two paths that are there. And He will be saying in the *Gītā*, that between the two, *karma-yogo viśiṣyate,* 'the path of *karma* is superior'. It yields both the fruits of *abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa*. That is the development of thought in the *Gītā,* that, by a certain spiritual technique, you convert action into inaction: you get the fruit of inaction through action itself. That is a tremendous study. And in the Taoist philosophy of China also, it is very much emphasized. In fact, in management techniques today, this is a serious subject of study. While in the U.S.A., I read a book by a

Chinese scientist connected with the MIT in America, where he mentions that, in all these management techniques, you are acting all the time, but by a certain spiritual technique you cease to be acting. There is such a state of mind, calm and steady, in which you do a lot of work, yet you don't feel it, you carry so little burden. Now this kind of study is becoming more and more appreciated in modern management techniques. The most heavy responsibility is there, yet you reap the benefit of inaction in the midst of action. That will be expressed in one single verse by Śrī Kṛṣṇa later in the fifth chapter, *śloka* 18, of the *Gītā*. And he gives the reason:

न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते।
न च संन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति॥४॥

Na karmaṇāmanārambhāt naiṣkarmyam puruṣo'śnute;
Na ca samnyasanādeva siddhim samadhigacchati— 3. 4

'By non-performance of action, none reaches inaction; by merely giving up action, no one attains perfection.'

This is a very clear simple statement. *Na karmaṇām anārambhāt naiṣkarmyam puruṣo'śnute*, 'true *naiṣkarmya,* actionlessness, cannot be attained by non-performance of action'. Let me do nothing, then I shall attain actionlessness—that can never be; *na ca samnyasanādeva*, 'not even by renouncing action', *siddhim samadhigacchati,* 'one is going to get spiritual perfection'. First, you begin an action, then you give it up. That is called *samnyasana;* the other is, *karmaṇām anārambha,* 'by not beginning any action at all'. It is a very important thought that is contained in this verse, and it has wide ramifications also for society. Now, you enjoy a quiet hour after you spend some time in hard work. The whole day you work, in the evening you get relaxation in meditation or other higher spiritual practices. You enjoy it. The whole day you are lazy, no work to do, you want to enjoy that meditation! Is that possible? It is like a person who is unemployed, and you tell him: 'I give you one month's holiday'! What is the use of a holiday for an unemployed person? An employed person can enjoy a holiday. But, many of our people have not learnt this lesson yet. Real holiday-enjoyment can be experienced only *after* a period of hard work. First, k*arma*, then comes *naiṣkarmya.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa's statement has

reference to all of us, especially in India, that all enjoyment of actionlessness is possible *after* pursuing action, expressing your energy in action and endeavour. So, he said, *Na ca samnyasanādeva siddhim samadhigacchati,* 'by mere renunciation of action, you are not going to get perfection'. Action is a profound subject. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will tell us later on, in the next chapter, verse 17: *gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ,* 'the way of action is mysterious,' difficult to understand.

One of the British writers, I think it was L.P. Jacks, who was a very prominent writer about eighty years ago, mentions this truth: if you trace action, at the end of it you will find inaction; if you trace inaction, at the end of it you will find action. In all society, you will find this. Action is a mysterious subject for us to understand. Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses the same word: *gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ,* 'the way of *karma* is mysterious', not easy to understand. So, he is going to illumine that subject by his own exposition in this and the next chapter. And he continues:

न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत्।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः॥५॥

Na hi kaścitkṣaṇamapi jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt;
Kāryate hyavaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijairguṇaiḥ—3. 5

'Verily, none can ever rest for even an instant, without performing action; for all are made to act, helplessly indeed, by the *guṇas* (or forces) born of *prakṛti* (nature).'

No man or woman sits, even for an instant, without doing some work or the other. See the language! Everyone is working; so many things are going on. Where is real actionlessness except in death? A table or a chair, you may say, is inactive. But a man is always active in one form or the other. *Na hi kaścitkṣaṇamapi jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt*, 'not doing action, nobody remains even for a moment'. *Kāryate hyavaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijaiḥ guṇaiḥ*, 'impelled by the forces of nature all are engaged helplessly in some action'. This is the way of human life. Something pulls us out into action. That is our own nature within. That nature finds expression in making us do this work, that work, something or the other. So, this is the first lesson we

must understand. If I go away from Hyderabad and go to Kashmir for a holiday, there also I am active, but I perform a different type of action. That is all. Action is still there. In holiday also there is action, but not the particular type of action which I was doing; a change of action, that is all. All holiday is only a change of action, due to a change of situation. That is all. *Kāryate hyavaśaḥ karma; avaśaḥ,* 'in spite of yourself'. *Rājasik*, *tāmasik*, and *sāttvik* nature is there within us; *rājasik* nature impels us to do some work or the other. This is why we are told that we cannot escape action. If that is so, how shall I perform action? The next two verses give the answer and are, therefore, very important; they convey a profound philosophy of action.

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन्।
इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते॥६॥

Karmendriyāṇi samyamya ya āste manasā smaran;
Indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate—3. 6

'One who, restraining the organs of actions, sits revolving in the mind thoughts regarding sense objects, he or she, of deluded understanding, is called a hypocrite.'

Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving us a warning! That if you do like 'this', you will be a hypocrite. And in the next *śloka,* verse 7, he gives the other side: *this* is the way to do work by which you get the highest. The first is what makes for hypocrisy; the second is what makes for real spiritual growth and development in the individual. So, he says: 'That person is called a *mithyācāri'. Mithyācāra* is the exact word for hypocrite in Sanskrit. Now, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: 'controlling all organs of action', *karmendriyāṇi samyamya; ya āste manasā smaran*, 'but the mind is constantly thinking of sensory objects', though physically, the person is absolutely quiet. Such a person is a *mithyācāri,* a hypocrite. There is lot of such hypocrisy in the behaviour of people. We thought that 'to be inactive' is a high ideal. But our spiritual development is not very high. Our sensory cravings are very strong. So, we try to do all this in a subversive way by secret methods. That makes for hypocrisy; not straight. The honest way is: do you want this? Yes, I want it. The devious way is: I don't want it, but he or she will be seeking for it by

devious means. That kind of hypocrisy has come to us due to not understanding this high ideal of actionlessness, desirelessness, etc. In our present state we can say honestly, yes, I want sense pleasure. There is no hypocrisy in it. I run after a thing, I seek it, I want it, but why be a hypocrite? When the mind develops, I will be able to say, I don't want it because I have achieved something higher within me. Then there will be no hypocrisy. And so, *karmendriyāṇi samyamya ya āste manasā smaran indriyārthān,* 'restraining the organs of action, but with the mind thinking of sense objects.' Such a person is nothing but a *mithyācāri,* a hypocrite. Don't be a hypocrite, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells every human being. And so the next verse puts it in a positive way.

यस्त्विन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्यारभतेऽर्जुन।
कर्मेन्द्रियै: कर्मयोगमसक्त: स विशिष्यते॥७॥

Yastvindriyāṇi manasā niyamyārabhate'rjuna;
Karmendriyaiḥ karmayogamasaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate—3. 7

'But, O Arjuna, one who, controlling the senses by the mind, and remaining unattached, directs the organs of action to the yoga of action, excels.'

Sa viśiṣyate, 'he or she excels'. Who? *Indriyāṇi manasā samyamya,* 'who disciplines the sense organs by the mind'. Mind is the master. *ārabhate arjuna karmendriyaiḥ karmayogam,* 'O Arjuna, he or she is busy in the yoga of action with the sense organs of action'; such a person does it with a special *yoga buddhi;* that *karma* becomes *karma-yoga,* not mere action, but action which can elevate a person spiritually. *Asaktaḥ,* 'unattached'. The mind is not at all attached to these things. It has been detached from these things. Therefore, it can do things better and better. *Asaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate,* 'such an unattached person is excellent'. Here comes human excellence in action. *This particular verse is the best description of excellence in action. Niyamya,* 'disciplining', *indriyāṇi,* 'sense organs', *manasā*, 'by the mind', *ārabhate karma-yogam,* 'does the *yoga* of action with that attitude'; such a person is a *karma-yogī*. *Sa viśiṣyate,* 'he or she is most excellent'; that is the training everyone has to give to the mind. A sense of masterliness is manifested there. One is not lost in the work, but is

always free. Work with freedom, that is the idea. And Vedanta repeatedly says, work freely, give freely, whatever you do to the people, give it with a free mind, not with a sense of that *kanjūs* or miserly attitude with a very very limited mind. That is not correct.

Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives advice to all of us:

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मण:।
शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येदकर्मण:॥८॥

Niyatam kuru karma tvam karma jyāyo hyakarmaṇaḥ;
Śarīrayātrāpi ca te na prasiddhyet akarmaṇaḥ — 3. 8

'Do you perform obligatory action; for action is superior to inaction; and even the bare maintenance of the body will not be possible if you are inactive.'

Niyatam kuru karma tvam, 'whatever actions are to be done, do them well'. *Niyatam* means what is to be done. Suppose you are working in an office, you have got some responsibilities: discharge them properly—let not anybody have to come to supervise or say, do this and that. We need to develop self-respect so that we will do the work allotted to us to the best of our capacity. That attitude is an excellent attitude, a free people's attitude, far different from the attitude of a slave for whom somebody must be there with a stick to see that he or she does the work properly. That is a wrong attitude. So, *niyatam kuru karma tvam,* 'whatever is apportioned to you as your duty, do it carefully, do it well'. *Karma jyāyo hi akarmaṇaḥ,* '*karma* is superior to *akarma*'. Action is superior to inaction. *Śarīrayātrāpi ca te na prasiddhyet akarmaṇaḥ,* 'if you are inactive, even the care of your body will not be possible for you to do'. You have to do something even for the maintenance of your body. *Śarīra-yātrā, jīvan-yātrā,* these are the words used here. To carry on the body as a living entity, you need to do some work. If you say I will be absolutely inactive, that won't be possible. The stress is on action, but with that *yoga-buddhi* which was described in the second chapter. So, the idea of getting anything by not doing any work is a very peculiar attitude—waiting for some magic or miracle to happen; no

miracle is going to happen. The only miracle will be that you will be left behind! A Sanskrit verse, a traditional verse says,

Udyoginam puruṣasimhamupaiti lakṣmī
daivena deyamiti kāpuruṣā vadanti;
Daivam nihatya kuru pauruṣam-ātmaśaktyā
yatne kṛte yadi na sidhyati ko'tra doṣaḥ —

'Lakṣmī or Fortune comes to that lion among human beings who is industrious', *udyoginam, puruṣasimham,* 'that lion among human beings', *upaiti lakṣmī,* 'Lakṣmī runs towards such a person with blessings'. *Daivena deyamiti kāpuruṣā vadanti,* 'the low-level human beings, *kāpuruṣā* says that, he or she depends on one's own destiny'. So, the verse says, *daivam nihatya,* 'throwing away all concept of destiny', *kuru pauruṣam-ātmaśaktyā,* 'through your own inner strength, be industrious, be active'. *Yatne kṛte yadi na sidhyati, ko'tra doṣaḥ?* 'In spite of all your efforts, if you did not get exactly what you wanted, what is wrong with it? That intense struggle, that effort, is the important thing. And most people do get when they undertake the struggle. Sometimes you may not get, that is no reason why you should give up industry and activity. Then he says that the activity we do with and in this body, can be made an instrument of our own spiritual liberation. That is the essential teaching of the *Gītā* that, normally, all the work you do increases the bondage, but because of the spiritual turn you give to it, you find work becomes an instrument of spiritual liberation.

This idea is expounded now from this verse 9 and onwards, from another point of view, using a very ancient word which was so constantly used in Vedic literature, especially the ritualistic portion of the Vedic literature, the concept of *yajña. Yajña* means sacrifice, normally ritualistic sacrifice. Every doctrine, every religion, has a chapter on sacrifice: you light a fire, offer things into that fire. That is called Vedic sacrifice. In the old ritualistic section of the Vedas, many types of sacrifices are mentioned. So, the word *yajña* is used for it. Śrī Kṛṣṇa takes this word, but gives it a new meaning, makes it ethically significant. That is what he has done in the third and fourth chapters. *Yajña* or sacrifice: the whole world is based on it, he is going to tell us. What is the meaning of sacrifice? Verse 9 says:

यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः।
तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर॥९॥

Yajñārthāt karmaṇo'nyatra loko'yam karmabandhanaḥ;
Tadartham karma kaunteya muktasaṅgaḥ samācara—3. 9

'The world is bound by actions other than those performed for the sake of *yajña;* do you, therefore, O son of Kuntī, perform action for *yajña* alone, devoid of attachment.'

The world is bound by such kinds of actions which are not done in the spirit of *yajña*. If you do it in a spirit of *yajña,* there is no bondage at all. So, *tadartham karma kaunteya,* 'do your actions in that spirit of *yajña', muktasaṅgaḥ samācara,* 'free from attachment, do that action'; then there will be no bondage. This is based upon the theory of sacrifices mentioned in Vedic literature. This is true of all religions: sacrifice is an essential item in the Jewish religion. The idea is, you give something to the Divine, then what remains is yours. That is the most important concept of *yajña.* So, you live on what remains after *yajña.* First give; then what remains after giving, is good. So, in the *Manu Smṛti,* the *Mahābhārata,* and in many other books also, this idea comes repeatedly. Bondage comes when you cook and eat for yourself. When you eat after working for the good of others, what food remains, is pure and holy. That is the language. 'One who cooks only for oneself, eats only for oneself, eats only so much of sin', Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to tell us soon. That is the discharge of one's obligation to society, also to nature, and to the whole world. Never forget that we are all interconnected. *That concept of interconnectedness is the central theme of this chapter*. Just like we perform a sacrifice, that goes to the gods, they enjoy it, they send you rain and other valuable things back here for us. That is the old idea. Extend that to the whole of life and to the universe; take it away from its ritualistic mooring. Make it an inter-human and an inter-nature philosophy. Make it ethical and moral. Then we shall be able to understand what Śrī Kṛṣṇa has done with that word *yajña* in this and other chapters. *Yajñārthāt karmaṇo'nyatra loko'yam karmabandhanaḥ,* 'when work is not done in the spirit of *yajña,* this world suffers bondage from actions'; that is the simple teaching. A selfish person works only for oneself. Naturally, it is bondage;

this contraction of life to a point; any action done, without the spirit of *yajña* inspiring it, makes for bondage. Therefore, *tadartham karma kaunteya,* 'do action in that spirit (of *yajña*)', *muktasaṅgaḥ,* 'giving up attachment'. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa takes it further in the next verse by saying:

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः।
अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक्॥१०॥

Sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ srṣṭvā puro'vāca prajāpatiḥ;
Anena prasaviṣyadhvameṣa vo'stviṣṭakāmadhuk— 3. 10

'The Prajāpati (the Lord of creatures), having in the beginning projected mankind (from out of Himself) *together with yajña,* said, "By this shall you multiply; this shall be the milch cow of your desires."'

This *yajña* concept is not merely of the earth; it is not limited to our own human experience. This has a cosmic dimension. The whole cosmos is based upon this concept of *yajña.* That is a wonderful development of thought you will find in Vedanta as well as in the *Gītā,* that everywhere there is give-and-take going on. Before taking, give; then you get the best. There is a unity in this universe. Everything is related to everything else. Nothing is unrelated. This is a wonderful idea in modern physics also, that any event taking place in any part of the world affects the whole world. May be very small, but it is there, this interconnectedness. This is further expounded by modern Western biology. The tremendous connection among all living species is very much emphasized in biology. From Darwin onwards, biology studied nature, and discovered this interconnectedness of things. Some examples are given in his scientific books. A bird flies, goes far away; you catch that bird, and examine its legs. You can detect mud in that leg; in the mud you will see some seeds of plants. That mud and the seeds are planted in the earth and they sprout; the bird does not know it. The bird is an instrument of nature for this great diffusion and for the concept of interconnectedness of things in nature. Similarly, you destroy a species; thereby you destroy agriculture itself. The example taken in biology is of that most humble earthworm; it does immense good to the earth by nourishing it and improving its fertility. But we do not understand its services until a scientist tells us. Earthworms are doing immense work.

We destroy nature out of greed and we suffer later on. In ignorance, we destroy the great ecological balance of the world. *That old concept of yajña is today developing into the truths of ecological balance.*

That Prajāpati, the projector of the universe, projected the universe first and in order to maintain this universe, he projected also this *yajña. Sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatiḥ,* 'having projected this universe (out of oneself) along with *yajña, Prajāpatiḥ* said long ago'; what did he say? O Yajña, may you be a great blessing to all these beings; they will be able to live at their best, because of you. *Anena prasaviṣyadhvam,* 'may you prosper with the help of this *yajña', eṣa vo'stviṣṭakāmadhuk*, 'let this be a *kāmadhenu,* to all of you', the wish-fulfilling cow of our mythology. We are thus asked to strengthen the spirit of *yajña.* There will then be more happiness in society. Today we understand it more and more from an international point of view; international co-operation, international aid, is the language today.

There you can see the concept of *yajña,* as stated in the *Gītā,* finding expression in human relations. Within society you help each other. Today that national society has become international society, including the natural environments of plants and animals of the world. All are included in it in a very comprehensive vision.

On this subject, Swami Vivekananda said in his lecture on 'Vedanta and Its Application to Indian Life' delivered in Madras in 1897 (*Complete Works,* vol. 3, p. 241):

'Our Upaniṣads say that the cause of all misery is ignorance; and that is perfectly true when applied to every state of life, either social or spiritual. It is ignorance that makes us hate each other, it is through ignorance that we do not know, and do not love, each other. As soon as we come to know each other, love comes, must come, for are we not one? Thus we find solidarity coming in spite of itself. Even in politics and sociology, problems that were only national twenty years ago, can no more be solved on national grounds only. They are assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of international grounds. International organizations, international combinations, international laws are the cry of the day. That shows the solidarity.'

In English they use the word creation, because the people believed in duality like a potter turning out pots out of clay. The Creator is different, the material is different, and the product is different. That is creation. But in Vedanta we have no place for such a concept of creation. The word *sṛṣṭi* is wrongly translated as creation, but actually it is to be translated as *projection*. God projected the world out of himself; first the cosmos, then the starry heavens and all living organisms and eventually the human species. Everything comes from that One, and into that One the whole world will go eventually. That is the Indian concept of creation as projection. The Upaniṣads give three examples of creation as projection: first, the spider sending out its web, living in it, and taking it back; second, plants growing from the earth; third, hairs growing from the living human body. In all these, there is spontaneity and no second factor; similarly, from the One, the many has come. *Eko'ham bahusyām,* 'I am One, let Me be many.'

A society is strong, people are progressive, if the *yajña* principle inspires people in society. If there is not the idea of giving and taking in a mutual way, society becomes weaker and weaker and goes down.

देवान् भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः।
परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ॥११॥

Devān bhāvayatānena te devāḥ bhāvayantu vaḥ;
Parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ paramavāpsyatha—3. 11

'Cherish the *devas* with this, and may those *devas* cherish you; thus cherishing one another, you shall gain the highest good.'

In the book, *The Secret Life of Plants,* written in America, you will find the word *deva* used again and again; it is the personification of Nature's forces. *Devān bhāvayatānena,* 'help the *devas* with this *yajña*'; *te devāḥ bhāvayantu vaḥ,* 'they, the *devas* will help you'. Then he says, *parasparam bhāvayantaḥ,* 'nourishing each other', *śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha,* 'all will rise to the highest level'. Mutuality, interdependence is the way to progress; not by isolation, not by confrontation, not by exploitation. We violate nature and we become violated by nature. This should not happen. Nature is not

something to be destroyed. Nature can be used, but it must be replenished also. If you don't replenish it, you will be in trouble. And today the whole world is conscious of this problem. It is in this context that we should see this exposition of *yajña* by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the third chapter of the *Gītā*. From the Vedic context he takes ideas, but he uses his own philosophy to expound them, and they become perfectly human, of most intense value to all of us here. So, this language, *parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha,* 'help each other, then both of you will achieve progress'; go on destroying each other, both will perish.

In one particular field, you can see this truth being recaptured by a group of people. In America we have the Women's Liberation Movement. About twenty years ago, it started in a big way, 'We don't want to be a slave of man, we don't want to be tied down to the kitchen. This is a prison to us, let us get out. It is a joy that we shall be ourselves.' That was the beginning of that liberation movement. Betty Friedan, the famous liberationist, wrote her famous book, *The Feminine Mystique*, which began this liberation movement. Now, after twenty years, families are breaking down, children have no parents, and so many problems are arising in American society, and this very lady goes round America and writes a second book, *The Second Phase (of the Liberation Movement)*. There she quotes the remarks of many women, who have been liberated from the household and the kitchen, and are in high employment. But, they complain that they have not achieved real liberation; we are still treated as an item among items in industry; we have not discovered our personality at all. We get high salary, no doubt; but that is no real liberation. This very author, Betty Friedan, therefore, gives one or two beautiful ideas, which are old ideas put in a new context. And the first principle, she says, is, *there is no women's liberation apart from men's liberation*. I liked it very much; it is the echo of the *Gītā* idea: *Parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha!* I have quoted her exact words in my booklet, *Women in the Modern Age,* published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. I am giving this example to say that we think we can do it alone, but we cannot. For some time we can do, then we shall find that it will not be possible. You will have to carry others also with you; nobody will be happy otherwise; women will not be happy, men will not be happy. Of course, children will never be happy in such a situation.

So, *parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha,* is a wonderful message Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving to all humanity. Even the relationship between Soviet Union and America today is based upon this principle: *parasparam bhāvayantaḥ.* They were constantly enemies of each other. Iron curtain, and then it became a bamboo curtain, even that curtain is going away now. That is the start of the spirit of a healthy international human order. That is what the Divine Creator gave to the world along with creation: the principle of *yajña.* Strengthen this *yajña* value*,* and we will all be happy; weaken it, and we shall be in trouble. That *yajña* includes not only our relationship with other human beings, but also with nature. Today there is a tremendous recognition of this mutuality between humanity and its natural and human environment. That is the immense scope of this teaching of the third chapter, the concept of *yajña.* Some more relevant ideas are coming in the next verses.

The principle of a healthy social life is also based on this *parasparam bhāvayantaḥ* principle; not by fighting with each other, but by helping each other, serving each other; that will help all people to rise to the highest level. If you take from nature and not give back to nature, you will suffer. Take and give back, take and give back, that is the nature of a healthy human environmental relation. And as I said earlier, today we are realizing it by experiencing the evils of consumerism, over-technology, increasing industrialization, and all the various steps human beings are taking that cause poisoning of our environment, including the weakening of the far-away ozone layer that protects the earth from the harmful high frequency radiation coming from the sun. So this subject is of vital importance to the human being; and the whole subject comes under one word, *yajña*, originally meaning ‘ritual sacrifice’. But in the *Gītā*, it means this ethical sense, this spirit of service, this capacity to give and not merely to take. Therefore, it is *parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha.* If nature is exploited too much, it will destroy humanity itself, and that lesson is being driven home to us in the modern experience.

When we come to verse 16, we shall come across the very term *cakram* or wheel or cycle, being used by the *Gītā*, referring to the term ‘ecological cycle’. Just like what we see in a seed, then a sprout, then a plant, a flower, fruit, and again back to the seed: there is a *cakram* here. So also, solar

energy coming down to the earth, becoming plants, natural energies, animals, and human beings, and the energy goes back again; in this way there is a *cakram.* This is a cosmic principle according to this *Gītā* chapter. We are concerned only with the earth and the nearby environment, but actually *yajña* is a cosmic principle, expressing what modern science has recognized as the interrelatedness of things. So, the next verse says:

इष्टान्भोगान्हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविता:।
तैर्दत्तानप्रदायैभ्यो यो भुङ्क्ते स्तेन एव स:॥१२॥

Iṣṭān bhogān hi vo devā dāsyante yajñabhāvitāḥ;
Tairdattān apradāyaibhyo yo bhuṅkte stena eva saḥ—3. 12

'The *devas,* cherished by *yajña,* will give you desired-for objects, so, one who enjoys objects given by the *devas* without offering back to them (what is due), is verily a thief.'

Whenever you give back to nature, nature also gives you good things. We are seeing already in India that our forests are getting depleted, and our weather is getting into trouble. And weather gets into trouble means you and I also are getting into trouble. So, we are slowly realizing that truth: *Iṣṭān bhogān hi vo devā dāsyante*, 'nature's gods, they will give you back what is good for you'. But, *tairdattān apradāyaibhyo yo bhuṅkte*, 'if you enjoy what they have given to you, without returning to them their share', then what happens: *stena eva saḥ*, 'such a person is only a thief'. He doesn't give back what is due to nature and nature's gods, so the *Gītā* calls such a person a thief. Most of the modern technological civilizations are thieves from that point of view. But, fortunately, we have understood the seriousness of the situation and have decided not to remain a thief hereafter. That is why there are programmes like afforestation and cleaning of river pollution going on all over India. We are giving back to nature something we have increasingly destroyed. Then, we can enjoy what nature gives to us. The word used is *stena,* which means 'a thief'. The human being becomes a thief with respect to the environment, and the thief will be punished. And that punishment is already going on; all the rivers and other water sources are polluted, and, in some cases, the pollution is extreme.

यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः।
भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात्॥१३॥

Yajñaśiṣṭāśinaḥ santo mucyante sarva kilbiṣaiḥ;
Bhuñjate te tvagham pāpā ye pacantyātmakāraṇāt—3. 13

'The good people, living on the remnants of *yajña,* are freed from all sins; but those, on the other hand, who cook food (only) for themselves eat only sin.'

Whatever you eat after a sacrifice is called *yajñaśiṣṭa,* the remnant of a *yajña.* It is a technical term. *Yajñaśiṣṭa* is also called *prasāda*. Whatever is a *prasāda* is holy food; what is not *prasāda* has no elevating power for the human system. Even in the social context, you earn, you pay your taxes, what remains is your wealth to enjoy; by trying to avoid paying taxes through all sorts of tricks, society suffers; you also suffer. This idea we have to imprint upon the mind of everyone, that you can't get a peaceful social order without paying for it. Tax is what we pay for making a stable society. Those who avoid paying taxes, and adopt all sorts of tricks for it, they are not citizens, they are only *in* the nation, but not *of* the nation, and not *for* the nation; they are not fit to live in an ordered society. They are fit to have a life of their own separately in some unpopulated island; but, then, without human company, they will not often develop humanness. *Kilbiṣa* means sin or evil.

Then comes the statement: *Bhuñjate te tvagham pāpā ye pacanti ātmakāraṇāt*. This is a very profound idea. 'One who cooks only for oneself (and eats separately without caring for others), eats only that much sin.' That is the language. *Agham* means sin; *pāpa,* also means sin; *ye pacanti,* 'those who cook'; *ātmakāraṇāt,* 'only for oneself'. I am cooking only for myself; I don't care for others. That attitude is extremely bad. Therefore, very often, in our traditional Hindu houses, they follow what is called *bhūta-yajña,* the setting apart of a small portion of food after the cooking is over. That is given to any beggar, or birds, whoever needs it. They keep it separate; only the rest they utilize. The idea behind it is what this verse expresses. In the *Gītā*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Manu smṛti* this idea is expressed: *Agham tu kevalam bhuṅkte ye pacanti ātmakāraṇāt,* 'one who

cooks for oneself, eats only that much of sin'. That self-centredness is not appreciated at all. So, this is one important idea. Don't eat sin; eat virtue; food becomes virtue when it becomes a *prasāda.* You have given something to other people and you used for yourself what remained; that is beautiful. The *yajña* value is manifested there. This very teaching is given also by the *īśa Upaniṣad,* first verse: *tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā,* 'enjoy life through renunciation'. Then only you get the best of life. You care only for your own life; by that you will never enjoy the best of life. So, in verses 14 and 15, you find mention of this *cakram* or 'wheel or chain of life'.

अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसम्भवः।
यज्ञाद्भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः॥१४॥

Annād bhavanti bhūtāni parjanyāt annasambhavaḥ;
Yajñāt bhavati parjanyo yajñaḥ karma samudbhavaḥ—3. 14

'From food come forth beings; from rain, food is produced: from *yajña* arises rain; and *yajña* is born of *karma* or action.'

This is the chain of events. From food come all of us. 'All living beings come from food'. *Annāt bhavanti bhūtāni*. How does food come? *Parjanyāt annasambhavaḥ*, 'from rain food comes'. As soon as rain does not fall, food production also suffers. *Yajñāt bhavati parjanyo*, 'when you keep up that *yajña* spirit with respect to the environment, then rain also will fall in due time'; otherwise, you can spoil the rainfall system by spoiling your environment. What was a ritualistic idea in the *Karma-kāṇḍa,* ritual portion of the Vedas, becomes converted into an ethical idea of renunciation and service in the *Gītā*. Then, *yajñaḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ,* '*yajña* is the product of *karma*'. *Yajña* means an action oriented to the welfare of all around you, including yourself. That is called *yajña. Yajña* is an action. So, you find *anna, parjanya, yajña,* and now *karma.* These four items have come. Then the chain still continues:

कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भवं विद्धि ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम्।
तस्मात्सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम्॥१५॥

Karma brahmodbhavam viddhi brahmākṣara samudbhavam;

Tasmāt sarvagatam brahma nityam yajñe pratiṣṭhitam—3. 15

'Know *karma* to have risen from the Veda, and the Veda from the Imperishable. Therefore, the all-pervading Veda is ever centred in *yajña.*'

'Consider *karma* as born out of Brahma'; Brahma here means the Vedas. Vedas are often referred to as Brahma. *Karma* is interpreted in the Vedas. There you get this teaching. *Brahma akṣara samudbhavam*; from where did the Vedas come? 'From the Imperishable Reality itself'. From the Imperishable Brahman the Vedas came as a series of truths regarding the cosmos and human life and destiny. *Tasmāt sarvagatam brahma nityam yajñe pratiṣṭhitam,* 'therefore, this all-pervading Brahman is found established always in *yajña'.* Whenever you perform a dedicated action, you are already expressing that infinite Brahman, the Imperishable Reality. Swami Vivekananda said therefore (*Complete Works*, vol. 5, p. 228):

'The national ideals of India are RENUNCIATION and SERVICE. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself.'

What a wonderful teaching! The whole of ethical life is concentrated in two principles: renunciation and service. Renunciation of what? This self-centred ego or self. That has to be renounced. The larger Self must manifest. Then every action becomes service. That is why renunciation is the preceding value. The succeeding value is service. You can't do service without some form of renunciation. If I want to help somebody, to that extent I must give up my own self-interest. And so, renunciation and service are what is meant by this concept of *yajña.*

A ritualistic concept of the Vedas thus becomes transformed into a highly ethical principle, making for integration of human beings with other human beings in society, and of the human being with nature outside. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here that this infinite and imperishable reality of Brahman finds expression in every act of *yajña* that we do. What a wonderful idea it is! That apparently far away Brahman is close to you when you convert your action into *yajña.* Protection of animal species, plant species, and human beings—we have responsibility for all of them, only because we have the brain power to destroy all of them or to protect and nourish all of them. If the human being doesn't discharge this responsibility by expressing one's actions in terms of *yajña,* he or she will ruin everything and will ruin oneself also. That is why it is said here that everything is centred in *yajña,* sacrifice—not ritual, but work with this sense of dedication. A large Self feeling its oneness with all, oneness with nature, oneness with other human beings and expressing it in service. And we enjoy whatever remains after that kind of service and dedication. So, we now deal with verse 16 where this concept of a cosmic cycle is expressed very explicitly:

एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः।
अघायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति॥१६॥

Evam pravartitam cakram nānuvartayatīha yaḥ;
Aghāyuḥ indriyārāmo mogham pārtha sa jīvati — 3. 16

'One who, in this world, follows not the wheel thus set revolving, living a life of sin and being delighted in the senses, O son of Pṛthā—he or she lives in vain.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is very emphatic about this truth. This *cakra,* this wheel of interconnections, has been established from the very beginning of the universe. When the cosmic evolution started, this *cakra* also started, 'this interconnected cycle'—*evam pravartitam cakram.* 'One who does not follow this in this life', *na anu vartayati iha*; one who neglects this concept of *cakra* and breaks it, makes life one-sided, selfish, self-centred, etc.; what happens to such a one? *Aghāyuḥ,* 'his or her life is a life of sin', a life of evil. *āyuḥ* means life, and *agha* means sin or evil. Why is he or she

aghāyuḥ? Because he or she is *indriyārāmo,* 'being delighted only in one's own sensory pleasure'; he or she doesn't care to protect nature—just like poaching in the forest, destroying fine birds, rare animals and trees, though the State has prohibited it; people do all this; but why?, they want to sell all such, make plenty of money, and live a comfortable life; such people are living in sin, because they are *indriyārāmaḥ,* 'their delight is sensual only'. Up to a certain limit it is good to satisfy sensory cravings; but, beyond this limit, it is dangerous.

Today, in all international discussions on the subject, we make a distinction between human needs and human wants. And Gandhiji said, there is enough in this world to meet human needs, but there is not enough to meet human wants. Wants are multiplying all the time. Why do they do so? We yield to our sensory cravings all the time. Mind cannot discriminate, though every human being has that wonderful capacity which no animal has. Therefore, when a whole society becomes *indriyārāmaḥ,* 'devoted only to satisfying sensory cravings', then that society begins to decline. In fact, all civilizations begin to decline when the number of *indriyārāma* people begins to increase in that society. In our own Indian history it has happened several times—this stage of *indriyārāma,* resulting in social stagnation; *mogham pārtha sa jīvati:* 'Pārtha! Such people's life becomes vain, empty, meaningless, uncreative'. *Mogha* means meaningless. The life they live, this *indriyārāma* life, is a meaningless life. All the animals live accordingly. And human beings follow the same! But they forget their uniqueness; he or she can concern oneself with the welfare of others. But the *indriyārāma* state cannot help one to do this. So, these two are combined: *aghāyuḥ indriyārāmo mogham pārtha sa jīvati,* his or her life is in vain—absolutely meaningless, empty. Take for example, our India: three hundred million people are suffering from poverty, backwardness, illiteracy. And a few percentage of people have plenty of wealth; and they indulge in it. Look at that! An empty meaningless life. They have no concern for the world around them.

Referring to this type of people in India's past few centuries, in a letter from America dated 20 August 1893, Swami Vivekananda says (*Letters of Swami Vivekananda,* 1948 edition, p. 69; *Complete Works,* vol 5, p. 16):

‘I pity them. It is not their fault. They are children, yea, veritable children, though they be great and high in society. Their eyes see nothing beyond their little horizon of a few yards—the routine work, eating, drinking, earning, and begetting, following each other in mathematical precision. They know nothing beyond—happy little souls! Their sleep is never disturbed. Their nice little brown studies of lives never rudely shocked by the wail of woe, of misery, of degradation and poverty, that has filled the Indian atmosphere—the result of centuries of oppression. They little dream of the ages of tyranny, mental, moral, and physical, that has reduced the image of God (that is man) to a mere beast of burden; the emblem of the Divine Mother (that is woman) to a slave to bear children, and life itself, a curse.’

This is the wonderful statement in verse 16. And in verse 17, you find another type of life placed before all human beings. When a person becomes pure, disciplines the senses, and is on the way to realize one’s own infinite Self, the Atman, then he or she becomes a unique type of person who is not bound by any sense of external compulsion of duty, but his or her love and compassion and service flow out naturally, spontaneously. His or her very existence is a blessing to society; that idea is expressed in the next verse 17:

यस्त्वात्मरतिरेव स्यादात्मतृप्तश्च मानवः।
आत्मन्येव च संतुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते॥१७॥

Yastu ātmaratireva syāt ātmatṛptaśca mānavaḥ;
ātmanyeva ca santuṣṭaḥ tasya kāryam na vidyate —3. 17

‘But the person who is delighted in the Atman, satisfied in the Atman, and finds joy in the Atman alone, he or she has no obligatory duty to perform.’

That person has no *kāryam,* ‘duties’, to be done, because he or she has attained fulfilment. Evolution has reached its consummation in the realization of the immortality of the Atman. How is it achieved? *ātmaratireva syāt,* ‘one’s joy is entirely in the infinite Self’, God hidden within all of us. *Rati* means delight, it signifies also sex delight. All delight

is included in this word *rati,* and here the *rati* is *ātmaratiḥ eva syāt,* he or she has found tremendous joy only in the Atman, the infinite Self, the One Self in all beings; *ātmatṛptaśca mānavaḥ,* 'the human being who is also fully contented in the Atman'. Such a one doesn't need anything from outside. That person doesn't want to get any sensory object for his or her joy. He or she is full of joy within oneself. That language, taken from the Upaniṣads, is used here. That comes only at the highest level of evolution. *Rati* or pleasure we want, we want delight. In the beginning we get these in sense objects, but when we evolve, we realize that we are the infinite Self, and far far superior to all the sensory objects in the external world. When that knowledge comes, we come to this realization. *ātmanyeva ca santuṣṭaḥ,* 'finds delight in the Atman only'. To such a person, *tasya kāryam na vidyate,* 'he or she has no duties to perform'. He or she is absolutely free and becomes a blessing to the rest of humanity. When have we duties to perform? When we are imperfect, unfulfilled. But, when one realizes the infinite Atman, he or she does good to society not as a duty, not out of social compulsion, but as a spontaneous outflow of love and service.

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* has a section entitled *ānandasya mīmāmsā,* 'investigation into Bliss'. And the Upaniṣad says that 'all types of human pleasures are only a fraction of *ātmānanda*, the Bliss of Atman', *etasya eva ānandasya mātram upajīvanti.*

When you realize the Atman, your mind doesn't go out at all for sensory satisfaction; because there is no desire, hence there is no action. There is no action without desire. Impelled by desire, we engage ourselves in action. *Tasya kāryam na vidyate.* Why?, the next *śloka* explains it.

नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन।
न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिदर्थव्यपाश्रयः॥१८॥

Naiva tasya kṛtenārtho nākṛteneha kaścana;
Na cāsya sarvabhūteṣu kaścit arthavyapāśrayaḥ — 3. 18

'He or she has no object in this world (to gain) by doing (an action), nor (does he or she incur any loss) by non-performance of action—nor has he or she any need of depending on anyone for any desirable object.'

‘He or she has nothing to achieve by doing some work,’ *naiva tasya kṛtenārtho*. Take a young boy, age of ten or twelve. We must constantly teach him, ‘Work hard, work hard. You have to achieve many things.’ In fact, the very word achievement is a technical word used by Carl Jung of Zurich in his book, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (pp. 118–20). Pleading for an important place in life for the culture of the personality, or the spiritual enrichment of the individual, Carl Jung says (*Modern Man in Search of a Soul,* pp. 125–26):

‘The afternoon of human life must also have a significance of its own and cannot be merely a pitiful appendage to life’s morning. The significance of the morning undoubtedly lies in the development of the individual, our entrenchment in the outer world, the propagation of our kind, and the care of our children. This is the obvious purpose of nature. But when this purpose has been attained—and even more than attained—shall the earning of money, the extension of conquest, and the expansion of life go steadily beyond the bounds of all reason and sense? Whoever carries over into the afternoon the law of the morning—that is, the aims of nature, must pay for so doing with damage to his soul, just as surely as a growing youth who tries to salvage his childish egoism must pay for his mistake with social failure. Moneymaking, social existence, family, and posterity are nothing but plain nature—not culture. Culture lies beyond the purpose of nature. Could by any chance culture be the meaning and purpose of the second half of life?’

A young person must be asked to work hard. Go into the world; *achieve* something. That is called achievement. That is not the time to keep quiet at all, or remain without any work. Not at all. That will ruin the person concerned. Let the person go out, work, satisfy his or her desires, make achievement the goal of one’s life at that stage. The same person, after achievement is over, must begin to think of other higher things. Then he or she slowly withdraws one’s mind from action and achievement. There is something I have missed, my own true nature. Let me try to realize this truth. That is the second stage. And Jung calls it, ‘culture’.

So, this particular person, whose knowledge and joy and sport are in the Atman, has nothing to gain in this world by running about here and there.

He or she is fulfilled. If at all he or she does something, it is for the good of others. He or she has nothing of one's own to gain. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will tell this later on in this very chapter.

Sri Ramakrishna gave a very beautiful example:

'You pour ghee or butter into the fire-pan, and when it is hot, you put some cake material (dough) into it. Then it makes sound. That sound is called sizzling; because it is still unripe, it is not cooked yet; so, sizzling goes on. Once it has become cooked, all sizzling stops. Absolutely calm and quiet.'

We are all in that sizzling stage in the first part of our life; we have got so many things to achieve. Then Ramakrishna added:

'But when you put a second cake again, again the sizzling will start.'

There is somebody else's desire to be fulfilled. It is free and not compelled by nature. That is the second state. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will refer to that later on. When you have nothing of your own to obtain, you serve to help others to gain their interests in life. That is a wonderful quality of human life. These are the two dimensions, both are welcome. Achievement is great, but personality enrichment is greater; we must have both in human life. So, *naiva tasya kṛtenārtho na akṛteneha kaścana,* 'neither by doing nor by non-doing he or she is going to gain anything'. He or she has achieved fulfilment. *Na ca asya sarvabhūteṣu kaścit arthavyapāśrayaḥ,* 'he or she has not to go to any being to achieve anything for oneself'. He or she has gained the highest, the ever pure, ever free Self itself.

This verse tells humanity that there is a state where we go beyond all sensory attractions and desires. Today's Western civilization is making its thinkers aware that there is too much of this tyranny of consumerism that is ruining their civilization. About America it is said that 6 per cent of the people of the world are enjoying 40 per cent of the world's resources. After all, there is a limit to consumable things that are available in this world. So, many protests are coming from various sections of society against this wrong philosophy of consumerism; and only when the world understands that there are dimensions above the sensory level of the human personality, then, only then, will set in a turn of human energy inward: let me see what

is my own true nature, I am not this sensory system, there is something higher. That person is described here. *Na cāsya sarvabhūteṣu kaścidarthavyapāśrayaḥ.* 'He or she has not to go before anybody and pray, give me this and give me that', Such a person is full, is fulfilled. That state is also there. Even as this state of insatiable desire is there, that other state of fulfilment is also there. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is dealing with that subject here, and he will give his own example in that matter. The next *śloka,* verse 19, says:

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर।
असक्तो ह्याचरन् कर्म परमापषेति पूरुषः॥१९॥

Tasmāt asaktaḥ satatam kāryam karma samācara;
Asakto hyācaran karma paramāpnoti pūruṣaḥ — 3. 19

'Therefore, do thou always perform obligatory actions, without attachment; by performing action without attachment, the human being attains to the highest.'

Tasmāt, 'therefore', *asaktaḥ satatam kāryam karma samācara,* 'always perform your duties without attachment'. Any amount of work you can do if there is no impulsion of this craving of sensory desire—I must have this, I must have that, that kind of attitude. *Asakto hyācaran karma param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ*, 'one who performs actions in a spirit of detachment, he or she will achieve the highest realization'. *Param āpnoti,* 'will achieve the Supreme', here, in this very life itself. That is the teaching *Gītā* is going to stress again and again. To be detached is very difficult. But that does not mean we should not start trying. In the beginning it may be difficult, but as you go on doing, you will find more and more areas in which you are able to perform actions in a spirit of non-attachment; by constant struggle, we can enrich our lives with the spirit of non-attachment. Action goes on, attachment is not there; why should it be impossible? In fact, very often, when we hear these teachings, the idea comes, 'O, it is impossible!', meant for only saints and sages. Some people think like that.

Gandhiji was once asked about non-violence. 'O, it is impossible,' people say. Then Gandhiji said, 'In this marvellous scientific age, how

many impossible things are becoming possible! Why not this also?' After Gandhiji's time, we have seen many more impossible things becoming possible: man landing on the moon, seeing the other side of the moon. Nobody had earlier seen the other side of the moon. We have been told all these thousands of years, 'nobody has seen the other side of the moon.' But what an impossible thing we have achieved today! We have *seen* the other side of the moon, we have *gone* to the moon. We have got down there. What is impossible then? Similarly, 'O, I can't control attachment, I can't control anger, I can't control this and that. It is impossible.' Don't say it is impossible. There is nothing impossible. Tremendous capacity is there in the human mind. Have faith in yourself, you will achieve it. That spirit must come. Then only, these ideas will be translated into human life and work. So, we can begin with no attachment in certain areas, and extend it later to other areas. But it is a wonderful teaching. Work goes on, attachment goes away. Attachment makes for bondage—bondage for both. Even between wife and husband, love liberates both, attachment binds both. The one who is attached, and the one on whom attachment is placed, both are in bondage there. *Satatam* means always; *kāryam karma samācara,* 'perform whatever duties you have to do in life'; do all those actions with great zest and devotion, but in a spirit of detachment.

Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives an example, how by doing one's work, discharging one's social responsibilities, people have achieved the highest realization. And the famous example taken in many of our books is the story of King Janaka of Mithila in Bihar. Janaka was the ruler of a kingdom but he was also a *brahmajñāni,* knower of Brahman. Even the young sage Śuka was sent by his father for his spiritual education to this King Janaka. So, that example Śrī Kṛṣṇa is citing here: 'don't think that only when you are alone or in some forest, you can practise detachment. You can practise it in the midst of all your worldly responsibilities around you, that is heroism; but detachment practised when there is nothing to trouble you is not heroic. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa says now in verse 20:

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादय:।
लोकसंग्रहमेवापि संपश्यन् कर्तुमर्हसि॥२०॥

Karmaṇaiva hi samsiddhimāsthitā janakādayaḥ;
Lokasamgrahamevāpi sampaśyan kartum arhasi —3. 20

'Verily, through action alone, Janaka and others attained perfection; even with the view to ensure *lokasamgraha,* the stability of human society, you should perform action.'

Men like Janaka, who was a great king, they all performed action and attained perfection. *Samsiddhim* means 'perfection'. *Karmaṇaiva hi,* 'by performing actions alone', they achieved *samsiddhi.* They had conquered attachment; sitting on the throne as an absolute monarch, with people honouring him; he was not carried away by all this. That is a wonderful achievement. When a little knowledge of the Atman comes, this energy comes to the human being, incorruptible power comes to the human being. An ordinary person is carried away by a little power, by a *little* temptation from the outside world; how small that person must be! Here is another person, huge temptations come, but no disturbance at all in the mind. That is the example given in the second chapter towards the end describing a person of steady wisdom: *āpūryamāṇam acalapratiṣṭham samudram āpaḥ praviśanti yadvat,* 'minds unshakeable like a mighty lake, full to the brim, into which so many rivers flow without disturbing that lake, without causing a ripple in that lake'. Our minds must be like that. That is what the *Gītā* said earlier. Strong, stable minds, gigantic minds, heroic minds, and not goody-goody small type of people. Too many small people are there in power in many countries. That should not be and need not be. Some strong people, of heroic attitude, must be there. All that will come only when we start this kind of struggle. Then something great will happen to this nation and every other nation.

Writers often quote Lord Acton's famous dictum—power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely. The *Gītā* gives us a philosophy of life and work which can make power incorruptible. The *Gītā* will deal with this subject in its fourth chapter through its *rājarṣi* concept which we shall deal with in due course.

This will make possible more happy inter-human relationships. Therefore, He said: *Karmaṇaiva hi samsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ*, 'without giving up action (or going to the forest), even as a king, men like

Janaka achieved *samsiddhi*, perfection even in the midst of action'. *Lokasamgraham evāpi sampaśyan kartum arhasi,* 'you should work even with the view to ensure the stability of human society'. Suppose you have no desires of your own. You are free. You don't need to work at all. Still you must work, because there are others who are in need; you are there to help. That is called *lokasamgraha,* 'ensuring the stability of the human society'. *It is a wonderful concept in the Gītā, the ethics of lokasamgraha, welfare of the world*. Why should anybody suffer in my society? I am here, as Gandhiji said, to wipe the tears from the last weeping person in my society. There also, again, action continues, but it is not for one's own sake. It is for the good of others. That is a very important concept of ethics in the *Gītā*: this concept of *lokasamgraha.* How to see that not merely our own society, but the international community, the whole world, is made better, happier, more fulfilled? I am here to work for it, I have nothing to gain for myself—there must be that attitude. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is adding that: *lokasamgrahamevāpi*, 'even from the point of view of ensuring the stability of human society', one should not remain quiet. Though you have no desires, do work for the good of others. How much more should we, who are in the world with our own problems, sympathise with others. Therefore, continue to work, help each other. *Parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha.*

One of the greatest truths that must inspire India today is this concept of parasparam bhāvayantaḥ. What have we achieved during these forty years of freedom? We could have banished illiteracy, even the dismal poverty of our millions. But all the upper class people became so self-centred that they did not care for anybody else. All the colleges, all the schools, would be inside or near about the towns. Rural areas were neglected, about three hundred million people were left in their dismal condition. The result is we have a lopsided development, apparently a powerful nation, but with feet of clay. In spite of having the third greatest scientific manpower state in the world, we have got about three hundred million people in dire poverty. What is the use of that scientific manpower? Now this kind of revolution in our thinking has just begun. It will do immense good.

In that context, the *Gītā* ideal will be a tremendous inspiration to translate all these into national character-strength and bright transformation

of our human situation. So, *lokasamgrahamevāpi sampaśyan kartum arhasi:* 'even from the point of view of *lokasamgraha*, we should act vigorously'. *Samgraha* means protection, care, welfare, etc.; *loka* means people, especially common people, keeping in view the happiness and welfare of the millions and millions that are there. Gandhiji told one of the Congress patriots at that time: 'whenever you have a doubt on a particular question, you just keep quiet for a minute, ask this question to yourself: "If I do this, will it bring good to the lowest man in society?" If it will bring good, then you adopt it.' That kind of ideal Gandhiji gave. How to chose an action? We can choose it for our own fattening. No. Ask: 'Does it bring good to the poorest and lowest people?' Then it will be perfectly all right. Lot of such thinking has to come to our nation. We have been too self-centred at the upper level. And whatever good policies are adopted in our Parliament, when it comes to implementation, it is stolen at each level by the staff employees, and very little reaches the people who are far below in society. That has been our experience all this time. That will go when we understand these teachings as given in the *Gītā* and in our man-making and nation-building Vivekananda literature. So, *lokasamgraha* is a tremendous concept of general human welfare, and it must be a constant attitude in our minds. In some of our villages I have seen that the powerful members of the village will appropriate whatever is good for them, and will not care to do what is good for the common people around. How can a nation grow when people behave like this? Therefore, a little of this philosophy of *lokasamgraha* must enter into the mind and heart of our people.

Then, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives a universal truth. In society, there is such a thing as imitation by ordinary people of other eminent people. Suppose that in a village there is an important person. Whatever he or she does, other people will like to follow. There is this mimetic tendency, imitation tendency, in society. In sociology we study it. Because that is so, the eminent person must set an example so that those who imitate him or her will do good and not bad. So, anybody who is prominent in society has to keep a standard of conduct and behaviour. That subject is coming up now with Śrī Kṛṣṇa taking his own example—it is a very interesting section in this third chapter. He says:

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः।
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते॥२१॥

Yadyad ācarati śreṣṭhaḥ tattadevetaro janaḥ;
Sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokastat anuvartate — 3. 21

'Whatever the superior person does, that is also followed by others; what standard he or she demonstrates by action, people follow that.'

Śreṣṭhaḥ means one holding a high position; money, intellect, political power, whoever has more of any of these, that person is a *śreṣṭhaḥ* in that particular society; 'whatever he does, other people try to follow'. That is the nature of human society: *yadyad ācarati śreṣṭhaḥ tat tat eva itaro janaḥ; Sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokaḥ tat anuvartate,* 'whatever standard he or she keeps up, all others follow that very standard'. What a beautiful concept! Yet, it can also be in the wrong way. That is why today, with corruption at the top, corruption has reached down from top to very bottom. So, the people at the top must be of high standard of conduct. In our concept of human society, we had in earlier centuries till now a wonderful idea and practice; the highest person in society, namely the *brāhmaṇa,* was also the poorest person. He or she kept a very high standard of conduct and behaviour for centuries together till the whole society fell down in its decadent period. I have dealt with this in detail in the Introduction.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, Sri Ramakrishna's father, Kshudhiram Chatterjee, was asked by a zamindar to give false evidence in the court in his favour. He replied, 'Sorry, I cannot. I know it is not true, I cannot give false witness'. That zamindar was a wicked man, who told him: 'Then you will have to suffer.' 'I don't mind. I shall speak the truth only. I am not going to give any false witness.' Because of that, Sri Ramakrishna's father was sent out of that village by the Zamindar. He took his small bundle of possessions and, with his two children and their mother, started to walk out. After some distance, another zamindar, a good man, in another village saw him. He told Kshudiram: 'you come and stay in my village, Kamarpukur. I will give you a piece of land.' In that village Sri Ramakrishna was born. See that quality of life, that high standard of moral conduct; money is not everything; there is honour, there is truth. Year by

year, after national independence, we are losing that capacity. For example, we wanted to get political freedom. We had to suffer, we had to get police beating. And yet many came forward and paid the price of freedom by suffering. We had that capacity then, but that is almost gone now. That is our misfortune today.

Yadyad ācarati śreṣṭhaḥ tattadevetaro janaḥ. 'Other people follow the way that the *śreṣṭhaḥ* takes'; *sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokastat anuvartate,* 'whatever *pramāṇa* or standard he or she keeps up, other people follow that standard'.

A father at home keeps a high standard of conduct; the mother also keeps a high standard, children will follow the ways of the father and the mother. People very often forget that, around them, are little children *very* critical and observant of what the father or mother is doing. And if they do bad things, the children will say to themselves: 'alright, we will do double of that bad thing'. It is natural. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling here that to be at the top of society is not easy. You have to set high standards. That is not what is happening. In fact, more and more evil people are getting all the honour in human society. In Australia, or America, or England, the media gives most space to evil people; somebody robs a bank or passengers in a running train, involving millions of dollars; the media makes that robber a hero, books are written about him and he becomes a millionaire in no time. An honest person has no place at all. This is an inverted type of social value system. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving this teaching for the good of society. Beware! If you are a leader, set a good example for the rest of the community. To be a leader is not very easy. You have to be very strict about yourself—a *sardār*, leader, must be a *sirdār,* i.e., one who gives his head for a cause. That is the teaching which he is giving us in the third chapter in the name of *karma-yoga,* Yoga of Action. Living and working in society, how careful we have to be to see the increase of only the good in the society and not of the bad. That is leadership in the true sense of the term. So, having said this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to tell us his own example. That is a fine way in which he has put it. 'I have nothing to gain in the whole world, but see how active I am.' That is the subject that is coming up in the next three verses.

What a great responsibility it is for one to be a senior, the junior looks up to the senior. Both senior students and junior students, we have in our schools. Junior students look up to the senior students. However the seniors behave, the juniors like to follow. Śrī Kṛṣṇa expressed this idea as a sociological truth and as a truth which involves a sense of social responsibility on the part of people who are called leaders. In the next verse, verse 22, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is referring to himself as an example. 'Look at me, Arjuna,' he is telling in the next two beautiful verses:

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किंचन।
नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि॥२२॥

Na me pārthāsti kartavyam triṣu lokeṣu kimcana;
Nānavāptamavāptavyam varta eva ca karmaṇi — 3. 22

'I have, O Pārtha, no duty, nothing that I have not gained, and nothing that I have yet to gain, in the three worlds; yet, I do continue in action.'

As an incarnation of the Divine, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is speaking: 'Look at me, Arjuna, I have nothing to attain in the three worlds, and yet I am constantly engaging myself in action.' The sense of duty comes from a certain need in you to obtain something from society, and you return that to society through a sense of duty. This is an important statement. Though a divine incarnation, Śrī Kṛṣṇa played various roles such as a political leader, spiritual teacher, a philosopher, as depicted in the *Mahābhārata*. Everybody looked up to him, he could have easily lived a lazy life. He need not have acted at all. Everything would be found for him. But he says, 'no, I am always active, though I have nothing to gain for myself.' He was extremely busy. He was constantly going from Dvāraka on the Gujarat sea coast area to Delhi near the present capital of India. How many times he has gone up and down through the Rajasthan desert, also going to faraway Magadha in Bihar! And, as beautifully expounded in the *Udyoga Parva* of the *Mahābhārata*, going as an ambassador of the Pāṇḍavas to the court of Kauravas to plead for peace between the two and avoid war and requesting the Kauravas to give half the kingdom to their Pāṇḍava cousins, and even reducing that demand to just five villages! I wish that some scholar will write a book on the political and diplomatic speeches of the *Mahābhārata.*

Readers will find echoes of those speeches in our contemporary United Nations!

Why was Śrī Kṛṣṇa so active? He gives the explanation in the next verse:

यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः॥२३॥

Yadi hyaham na varteyam jātu karmaṇyatandritaḥ;
Mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ—3. 23

'If ever I did not continue to work without any relaxation, O Pārtha, men and women would, in every way follow my example.'

'If I remain idle and do not do any work, other people looking up to me will think within themselves: "that is a good idea, let me also not do any work."' The language is *yadi hi aham na varteyam,* 'if I do not work', *jātu karmaṇi atandritaḥ,* 'constantly and with great energy'; if I do not work like this, *mama vartma anuvartante,* 'people will follow *my* way', *manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ,* 'all people, O Arjuna, in every way.' What is wrong in that? They will suffer. They need to work, they need to earn, they need to do many things, but they won't, following Śrī Kṛṣṇa's example. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will then become the enemy of the people by setting a bad example before them and ruining their life.

Just like a father at home, he does not need to play with toys; but children need to. So, father also joins with his children to play with toys, just to encourage them. That kind of communication between children and parents is very necessary for the growth of the children. So, a man like Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who doesn't need all this, says, 'look at my example. I am working very hard, if I remain idle, people will suffer.' That is expressed in the next *śloka:*

उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्यां कर्म चेदहम्।
सङ्करस्य च कर्ता स्यामुपहन्यामिमाः प्रजाः॥२४॥

Utsīdeyurime lokā na kuryām karma cedaham;

Saṅkarasya ca kartā syāmupahanyāmimāḥ prajāḥ —3. 24

'If I did not do work, these worlds would perish, I would be the cause of social disruption and I would also be ruining these people.'

If I keep quiet, become lazy, and do not do any work, 'I will be destroying these people', *utsīdeyuḥ ime lokā*. *Saṅkarasya ca kartā syām upahanyāmimāḥ prajāḥ*, 'I shall create utter social confusion and destroy the chances for fulfilment of many many people.' There is a profound truth in this, and our own social history is illustrative of this truth. We had the philosophy of 'non-action', *naiṣkarmya,* in the name of high mystical attitudes. We could digest it and spiritually benefit from it. After some centuries, most of our common people also followed that example: Laziness, no interest in work, minimum work, avoiding work, incapacity for team work, this kind of trait you find today in the character of many of our people. This is the result of our people's indigestion while trying to follow their great spiritual leaders who kept quiet because they had nothing to gain through exertion. And our people followed them. We are now trying to get rid of that 'holy laziness', that want of energy in work in our people. Take our rural people as an example. They are not interested in any improvement. They cannot work together to improve the village, its economic condition, its sanitation; except in a few villages, this is true of most of them. That indigestion came to them from centuries of experience of a wrong type. We have to change all this. We need the philosophy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and his *Gītā*. In that way, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling something of great relevance to all of us in our society here, and so these three verses give us Śrī Kṛṣṇa as an example and as a teacher. He says next: if so, what shall be our attitude to work?

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the next two verses that there are two types of people: the enlightened people, and the un-enlightened.

सक्ताः कर्मण्यविद्वांसो यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत।
कुर्याद्विद्वांस्तथाऽसक्तश्चिकीर्षुर्लोकसंग्रहम्॥ २५॥

Saktāḥ karmaṇyavidvāmso yathā kurvanti bharata;
Kuryāt vidvān tathā asaktaḥ cikīrṣuḥ lokasamgraham —3. 25

‘As the unenlightened, attached to work, acts, so should the enlightened act, O descendent of Bharata, but without attachment, desirous of the well-being of the world.’

Vidvān is a Sanskrit word to indicate the enlightened one, the knowing person. *A-vidvān* means the un-enlightened one. These two have two different approaches to life. This is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling in this verse. Very important verses are these, especially when we deal with citizenship responsibilities in our democratic society. These verses contain a profound message to all of us. If I am un-enlightened, how do I perform work? I work hard, but only to fatten myself. I don’t care for others at all. That is called the un-enlightened type. The other is the enlightened type. Work hard for the good of all, to develop the nation, to develop the whole world. Work hard with that attitude. That attitude is expressed in one profound word in this verse: *loka samgraham, the welfare of the whole world*. Unless you work hard, you can’t ensure the welfare of the whole world. And when you work hard, keep that motivation ‘I must serve the people; I must help them to achieve fulfilment along with my own personal fulfilment.’ In this way, with a sense of social responsibility I must work. Then only I do work in the right spirit. So, this *śloka* says, *saktāḥ,* ‘attached’. *āsakti* means attachment, attachment to oneself, one’s pleasures, comforts, etc. Such people are called *saktāḥ. Karmaṇi*, ‘in or to work’. Because through this work, I shall fatten myself: earn more money, enjoy more pleasures. That is called *saktāḥ karmaṇi.* Who are they?, *avidvāmsaḥ,* ‘the un-enlightened people’. All the work that they do is only to fatten themselves. Therefore, they are called un-enlightened people. *Avidvāmso yathā kurvanti bhārata,* ‘as the un-enlightened perform work’, similarly, *kuryāt vidvān,* ‘the enlightened person will also work’. What is their objective?, their motivation is different. ‘This motivation is for bringing happiness and welfare to the whole world’, c*ikīrṣuḥ lokasamgraham*. *Loka-samgraha; loka* means ‘people of the world’, *samgraha* means their welfare, their stability, their strength; all this is included in that word *samgraha. Lokasamgraha* is the wonderful motivation for work of a highly spiritual type that, in this world of work, we can become deeply spiritual if the motivation is *lokasamgraha.*

Throughout the *Gītā*, the *karma-yoga* expounded in it keeps up the *lokasamgraha* ideal in front always. We are all interdependent. That concept of interdependence we heard in a previous verse in this very chapter: *parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha.* How can I be happy when millions are unhappy? Even today we can see two worlds within the same country: one, extremely poor, buried in dismal poverty; the other, very wealthy, living high life, and consumerism-oriented. How can one be in such a situation, unless one is dead as far as the soul is concerned? So, work hard that that disparity should not remain. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *kuryāt vidvān,* 'the *vidvān* should do work like that', *cikīrṣuḥ lokasamgraham*, 'in order to bring about happiness and welfare of the whole world'. This is a wonderful idea. When we deal with citizenship responsibilities in a democracy, we get this idea. A citizen is not merely one living *in* a nation, but one who is *of* the nation and *for* the nation. He or she feels one with the people of the country. Then only he or she will be a true citizen. That citizenship implies an enlightened attitude. This attitude is the correct one for everyone to adopt in every country. Then comes the next verse:

न बुद्धिभेदं जनयेदज्ञानां कर्मसङ्गिनाम्।
जोषयेत्सर्वकर्माणि विद्वान्युक्तः समाचरन्॥२६॥

Na buddhibhedam janayet ajñānām karmasaṅginām;
Joṣayet sarvakarmāṇi vidvān yuktaḥ samācaran — 3. 26

'One should not unsettle the understanding of the ignorant, who are attached to action; the enlightened one, oneself steadily acting in the *yoga* spirit, should engage the ignorant also in all work.'

If there are ignorant people around you, you should not disturb their minds and their attitudes. You have to help them to improve themselves. But, in doing so, you should not unsettle their minds and make them bewildered as it were. You can make men and women bewildered by speaking to them something for which they are not prepared; that is not correct. Make them understand, slowly lead them step by step. That is the teaching. But, simply telling something to bewilder somebody is not correct. Because they are not so intellectual, not so educated, we should not

bewilder the minds of people by telling all sorts of fantastic things to them. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *na buddhibhedam janayet,* 'don't create *buddhibhedam,* confusion of mind', in the minds of people 'who are not so enlightened but are attached to action', *ajnānām karmasaṅginām*. *Joṣayet sarvakarmāṇi vidvān,* 'the *vidvān,* the enlightened one, will do the work that others are doing, and become an example to them in that very line', and thus make them go forward to higher levels. We have to go *with* them.

Long ago, I read a book by one Bruce Barton, an American. There he had said, 'a good teacher is one who will come to the level of the student, and then slowly lift him or her up'. If you want to get into a moving car, you must run *with the car* and then get into the car; otherwise, you will suffer. That is the way great teachers do. Go with the people, then educate them. So, men like Jesus and Buddha, they belong to that category. All good teachers belong to that category. Sri Ramakrishna was of that nature. Vivekananda said in his two lectures on 'My Master' delivered in New York and London in 1896 (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 4, p. 183):

'Do not try to disturb the faith of any man. If you can, give him something better; if you can, get hold of a man where he stands and give him a push upwards; do so, but do not destroy what he has. The only true teacher is he who can convert himself, as it were, into a thousand persons at a moment's notice. The only true teacher is he who immediately comes down to the level of the student and transfers his soul to the student's soul and see through the student's eyes and hear through his ears and understand through his mind. Such a teacher can really teach and no one else. All these negative, breaking-down destructive teachers that are in the world can never do any good.'

So, in the case of people who are not so highly educated or enlightened, we should just not disturb their minds by giving them some abstract ideas. Education is lifting a person step by step to a higher position. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *joṣayet sarvakarmāṇi*, 'he or she is working, you also work similarly'; set an example to him or her. Because he or she needs it, you are educating him or her in that particular direction. A true *yogī* is one who can come to the level of the other people and slowly lift them up even without their

knowledge. His or her very contact is enough to lift that person up from the level in which he or she is now living. So, this is an example which enlightened people have to set in society.

Then comes a section dealing with nature and the forces that are operating in nature, and the same forces operating in human beings also. It is a wonderful scientific idea developed in Indian philosophy, that the whole of nature consists of three *guṇas,* three forces, *sattva, rajas* and *tamas.* They are there in you and in me. Nature is there in us and also outside. This is the great philosophical truth propounded by ancient Sāṅkhya philosophy and adopted by Vedanta and others as well. *Sattva, rajas, tamas*: One is inertia, *tamas;* the other is tremendous energy, *rajas;* and balance, calmness, that is *sattva.* Now, when these are in equilibrium, there is no creation; then these three forces are in equilibrium; that equilibrium state is similar to the state of singularity in Western astrophysics. When that equilibrium is broken, cosmic evolution starts. Then only diversification becomes possible. So, nature in its original state was a perfect equilibrium of the three *guṇas, sattva, rajas* and *tamas.* Then at the time of creation what happened? A small disequilibrium started. That went on expanding, and that made for the evolution of the universe, the One becoming the many. *Prakṛti* is the word for nature; everything is a play of these three forces, *sattva, rajas, tamas*. You are feeling absolutely lazy, you sit quiet. Then *tamas* predominates in you. Very active, full of energy, *rajas* predominates in you. But, when you are perfectly serene and calm—occasionally we get into that mood also—*sattva* predominates in you. Now, this subject of *sattva, rajas* and *tamas,* and how to go beyond them in this very life will be the main topic in chapters 13, 14, and 15 of the *Gītā*.

In the context of work, what is it that works in you and in me? Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that *Prakṛti* or nature is working in you and me through these three *guṇas.* So, verse 27 says:

प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः।
अहङ्कारविमूढात्मा कर्ताहमिति मन्यते॥२७॥

Prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ;
Ahaṅkāravimūḍhātmā kartāhamiti manyate — 3. 27

‘The *guṇas* of *prakṛti* perform all actions; with the understanding deluded by egotism, the human being thinks, “I am the doer.”’

Prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ, all these *karmas,* all these activities, ‘are actually done by the three *guṇas* or energies of *prakṛti, sattva, rajas* and *tamas*’. Their permutation and combination create the whole cosmos. And that very nature has created us also, has evolved us in the course of cosmic and organic evolution. In due course, the human being also appears on the scene. Nature’s activities are everywhere. That is the language; but actually the human being arrogates all these activities to oneself, to one’s ego. *Ahaṅkāravimūḍhātmā,* ‘the foolish person full of egoistic tendency’, what does he or she say?, *kartā aham iti manyate*, ‘he or she thinks “I am the doer.”’ Nature has given that little ego into all of us and that ego arrogates all actions to oneself. Actually, it is nature that is doing all this within us as well as outside us. So, nature is a predominant force, and, unlike in modern Western scientific thought where nature means only external nature, Vedanta includes human nature also; in Vedanta nature in the human being is both external nature as well as a higher dimension of nature which finds expression as intelligence; this distinction between lower dull external nature, *aparā prakṛti,* and higher inner nature, *parā prakṛti,* will be discussed by the *Gītā* in its 4th, 5th, and 6th verses of the seventh chapter. The chemistry and physics of the world appear in you and me as the biochemistry and biophysics of the body. So, the body has its own logic of action. So also, the sensory system. But we think, ‘we are doing everything’. Actually, it is not we. Nature impels us to do all these things. That is a profound truth we must realize today. You want to eat. You think you are *choosing* to eat. Nature *compels* you to eat. So also many things you do. Nature is impelling you to do these things. We had seen earlier Carl Jung’s statement that we are only instruments of external nature, when we marry and produce offspring.

This truth must be realized: how nature is a powerful force, both cosmically and in the human system. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say later on, ‘you cannot resist these energy impulsions of nature’. Very often you have to submit, very often you have to say ‘yes’ to them. *But at the same time, let Western scientific thought realize that there is a higher dimension of nature in human beings, which is intelligence, that is the focus of human freedom*.

When that becomes manifest, we are able to go beyond the constraints of this external physical nature. Both are *prakṛti,* both are nature. One is called lower nature, *aparā prakṛti,* the other is called higher nature, *parā prakṛti.* Both together constitute the totality of the universe.

Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ*, 'various *guṇas* of nature, *sattva, rajas, tamas,* they do all these actions'. But, the human being, full of ego and with pride and arrogance, *kartā aham iti manyate,* says, 'I am doing everything'. Human freedom is limited by several factors dictated by nature. Take, for example, our genetic constitution; it operates in its own way; it limits the freedom of the ego. The human being has to submit to these energies that are present in nature.

It is good to recognize the forces of nature that are operating within us. Take for example modern studies of the psyche of the human being. The conscious mind, with the ego presiding, is mostly at the service of the subconscious and the unconscious. And that is all nature. That nature dictates to the conscious ego, but the ego thinks 'I am free'. It is good to recognize this, so that, if at all there is a hope of freedom, we can achieve it after knowing this truth and taking appropriate steps to achieve freedom from external nature, and realize our own higher nature or *parā prakṛti. There the subject of spirituality comes in.* Spiritual knowledge (*jnāna*) and realization (*vijñāna*) come in at that stage.

As we have seen earlier, take, for example, we eat, we drink, we develop our bodies; even we go to school, study and obtain marks, and get a job. Then we marry, then we rear families; most of this you will find is the play of nature only. Nature impels you to do this, impels you to do that. That is all what is happening. But when you become spiritually awakened, you are able to regulate these nature's functions and make them moral and ethical and value-oriented. *All values, says Vedanta, have their source in the Atman*. That is what you can do by developing your own spiritual awareness. Until then, it is merely all nature. In animals, nature completely predominates. When in any human being such a condition arises, he or she is an animal. In men and women, this little ego, a little focus of freedom, has come. But, it is extremely weak; much of it is nature itself. *The whole subject of the science of religion and spirituality, which is Vedanta, is how*

to strengthen that little focus of freedom and make the human being truly free from thraldom to nature. Only human beings can do it. But it cannot be done by merely arrogating everything to this ego. Ego is not really free. The waking ego dies in sleep and a dream ego appears in dream; and both egos disappear in deep sleep. It is under constraints of nature's forces. *Behind the ego is the Atman, our own infinite divine nature, which is the only source of all freedom and of all values*. When you realize that truth, you go beyond the constraints of nature. So, throughout the *Gītā*, both are mentioned. Ordinarily, we are subject to the forces of lower nature. But you *can* go beyond them. Go beyond them slowly, steadily; not with a sense of ego and arrogance, but by understanding the truth which is beyond this ego, your own infinite Self, the Atman. *That truth will be constantly dealt with in the Gītāas the message of spiritual freedom of every human being. That is our birthright*. At present we are subject to the forces of nature. Nature compels. So, don't try to fight nature frontally, you will never succeed thereby; fight nature in a diplomatic way. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to tell us that this egoistic approach is the foolish person's attitude. A wise person who knows the truth, how does he or she think? The next *śloka* explains it.

तत्त्ववित्तु महाबाहो गुणकर्मविभागयो:।
गुणा गुणेषु वर्तन्त इति मत्वा न सज्जते॥२८॥

Tattvavittu mahābāho guṇakarmavibhāgayoḥ;
Guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate — 3. 28

'But one who has true insight into the domains of *guṇa* and *karma*, knowing that *guṇas* as sense organs merely rest on *guṇas* as sense objects, does not become attached.'

To one who knows the *tattva*, the truth about things—*tattva* means the truth; Śaṅkarācārya explains it as *tasya bhāvaḥ tattvam,* 'the truth about a thing is called *tattvam*'*;* and *tattvavit,* 'one who knows the truth': how does he or she think? *Guṇakarmavibhāgayoḥ*, those who know the truth, 'about the division into *guṇa* and *karma*'*; guṇa* means the forces of nature, *karma* means activity—the one is dictated by the other. Those who know the truth of the relationship between *guṇa* and *karma*, how do they think? *Guṇā guṇeṣu vartante*, '*guṇas* are working amongst *guṇas*'*, guṇas* are interacting

with the *guṇas*. *Iti matva,* 'knowing this truth', *na sajjate,* 'are not attached'. The ego becomes detached and rises in the spiritual level. When one gets caught up in the force of the *guṇas* of nature, one becomes a slave. When the person becomes detached, he or she becomes free. So, in this case, *guṇā guṇeṣu vartante,* '*guṇas* work among *guṇas'*; *sattva, rajas, tamas guṇas* in the form of nature outside, as well as *guṇas* inside in the form of the sensory and psychic system; they are nothing but *guṇas* working among *guṇas*. Knowing this truth, *na sajjate,* 'he or she doesn't get attached'. *A wonderful attitude of detachment from all ego assessments comes and the Gītāspecially emphasizes this idea of detachment. Modern scientific temper also emphasizes this idea of detachment*. The flow of the current of life is going on, I am also in it, but I am detached from it. This is how Śrī Kṛṣṇa is developing this great idea.

This concept of the *guṇas* is expressed in many places in the *Mahābhārata:* The whole universe is the play of the *guṇas*. Today's physics speaks of three or four forces in nature. We are trying to understand them. One is gravitation, then electromagnetism, then the weak force, and then the strong force, within the atom. Now, these are the energies that constitute the whole of nature. Physics has not unified them yet. But it is trying to unify them; but in the state of singularity, astrophysics takes them as unified. The concept of the *guṇas* is a profound subject which deals with nature's energies in terms of the human being and the cosmos and which thinkers are trying to understand in terms of modern scientific terminology. Śrī Kṛāṇa continues:

प्रकृतेर्गुणसंमूढाः सज्जन्ते गुणकर्मसु।
तानकृत्स्नविदो मन्दान् कृत्स्नविन्न विचालयेत्॥२९॥

Prakṛteḥ guṇasammūḍhāḥ sajjante guṇakarmasu;
Tānakṛtsnavido mandān kṛtsnavit na vicālayet — 3. 29

'Persons of perfect knowledge should not unsettle the understanding of people of dull wit and imperfect knowledge who, deluded by the *guṇas* of *prakṛti,* attach themselves to the functions of the *guṇas*.'

Those who are dull-witted don't understand this truth. They are part of the flow of the *guṇas;* such people have to be educated gently. Don't unsettle their minds. But, slowly educate them. Otherwise, you will do harm to them. *Prakṛteḥ guṇasammūḍhāḥ*, 'those who are deluded by the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*', *sajjante guṇakarmasu*, 'they are attached to the activities dictated by the *guṇas*'. 'Such people of small understanding', *tān akṛtsnavido mandān; kṛtsnavit na vicālayet,* 'a person of full understanding should not disturb'. If you can, help them to understand better. But don't leave them in that disturbed condition. *Tānakṛtsnavido mandān kṛtsnavit na vicālayet*, 'the one who knows the whole truth, should not disturb one who knows only partial truth'. Then, for the first time, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is making a passing reference to his own divine nature as the inner Self of all; it will be more and more in focus as you proceed into the chapters ahead.

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा।
निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः॥३०॥

Mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi sannyasyādhyātmacetasā;
Nirāśīḥ nirmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigatajvaraḥ —3. 30

'Renouncing all actions to Me, with mind centred on the Self, getting rid of hope and selfishness, fight on, free from mental fever.'

A beautiful verse! *Yuddha* means battle. *Yudhyasva,* 'fight on', carry on the battle of life! How?, *vigatajvaraḥ,* 'without fever, i.e., inner tension', in a calm and serene way; *Mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi sannyasya*, 'renouncing all actions in Me'. There is a divine infinite Consciousness behind and beyond all nature which is only its manifested energy. As the *Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad* says, *Māyām tu prakṛtim vidyāt, māyinam tu maheśvaram,* 'the whole of nature is called *Māyā,* and the Supreme Divine is the Master of this *Māyā*'.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say: Magic and the magician; magic is not true, magician alone is true. Don't concentrate only on the magic. Remember, to have the magic, you need the magician. And so Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, *Mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi sannyasya*, 'renouncing all your actions in Me', who is beyond *Māyā* and is the master of *Māyā, adhyātmacetasā*, 'developing a

spiritual attitude', a spiritual frame of mind, *nirāśīḥ*, 'without craving', *bhūtvā nirmamo*, 'becoming free from the "I" and "mine"', *yudhyasva,* 'engage yourself in the battle (of life)', *vigatajvaraḥ,* 'without fever or tension'.

That is the profound message of this *karma-yoga* chapter of the *Gītā*. Do work without tension. Work without fuss. It is a very profound message. Generally, we haven't got the strength to work with calmness. Therefore, we make a lot of noise, a lot of fuss. A machine makes a lot of noise when it is not efficient, when it is not properly oiled. But if it is a good machine, it is silent and quiet. Formerly, our water pumps used to make lot of noise. Today, silent pumps are there. More efficiency is coming to our machines. Even our old auto-rickshaws, what noise they used to make! Only twelve miles per hour, but such a noise! Whereas a first class car runs at 80 miles an hour without any noise. So, in the human system also, there is such a thing as efficiency in life and action. That efficiency is measured by the high quantity of work turned out, but in calmness. Any kind of fussy work is inefficient work. We have seen people, even in households, making much noise and fuss, but with little actual turn out of work. Why not do work with a calm and quiet demeanour? Carry the burden with a smile as if there is no burden at all. This kind of spiritual strength must be behind all efficient work. That is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *vigatajvaraḥ. Jvaraḥ* means 'fever' in Sanskrit; *vigata* means 'without'. Fever means here, tension, excitement, fussiness. Specially fussy work, there are people who go on shouting all the time in the midst of work. That is inefficient work. The *Gītā* wants us to be absolutely calm and steady while at work. When we fly at high speed of about 600 miles per hour in a jet plane, we don't feel that it is moving at all; that is the mark of efficiency of a machine. Similarly, the human system must be trained to perform: *Yudhyasva vigatajvaraḥ*. It is the most urgent message we in India have to understand and apply today.

All our national problems we can solve, when we become efficient and honest workers, calm, silent, and steady. People who think that much passion is needed, much noise must be made, in the midst of work, don't know the science and art of work. It is the silent man that does the best of work. *Samatvam yoga ucyate;* Śrī Kṛṣṇa has defined his message of *yoga* in the second chapter as 'equanimity', *samatvam*, and *yogaḥ karmasu*

kauśalam, '*yoga* is efficiency in action'. Nothing is off your control when you work efficiently; and if you have a controlled anger, it will be perfectly relevant then; but, if anger takes control of you, then something goes wrong with you. So, in this matter, this particular teaching is very very significant. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling in the next verse, verse 31, how one becomes freed from the bad effects of work thereby:

ये मे मतमिदं नित्यमनुतिष्ठन्ति मानवाः।
श्रद्धावन्तोऽनसूयन्तो मुच्यन्ते तेऽपि कर्मभिः॥३१॥

Ye me matam idam nityamanutiṣṭhanti mānavāḥ;
Śraddāvanto'nasūyanto mucyante te'pi karmabhiḥ —3. 31

'Those persons who constantly practise this teaching of mine, full of *śraddhā* or faith and conviction, and without cavilling, they too, are freed from (the evil effects of) all work.'

Those who listen to my teaching as given here, with faith and devotion, and implement it in their lives, they also will become free from all relativity and bondage, and achieve perfect spiritual freedom. The *jñāni* attains it, and the *karma-yogī* also will attain it. Action creates bondage; but, there is a method by which you can remove the bondage aspect of action, so that action takes you to freedom. *That is a great message for the benefit of all human beings*. That is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa's message is declared to be a *Gītā*, a music for the human soul, a *Song Celestial*, as Sir Edwin Arnold terms it. Millions and millions of people, though caught up in the battlefield of work, will also grow spiritually when they follow this philosophy. That is the great assurance given by Śrī Kṛṣṇa to all the working people of this world. And almost everybody is a worker, whether you are rich or poor, or high or low, in society. *So, it is a universal philosophy for all humanity*. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'those who do not care to listen to this teaching and even pooh pooh it, they will have a very low level of life':

ये त्वेतदभ्यसूयन्तो नानुतिष्ठन्ति मे मतम्।
सर्वज्ञानविमूढांस्तान्विद्धि नष्टानचेतसः॥३२॥

Ye tvetadabhyasūyanto nānutiṣṭhanti me matam;

Sarvajñānavimūḍhānstān viddhi naṣṭānacetasaḥ —3. 32

‘But those who, decrying this teaching of mine, do not practise it, thoroughly devoid of all knowledge and discrimination, know them to be mindless and ruined.’

Those who, *etat abhyasūyanto,* ‘decrying this teaching of mine’; *na anutiṣṭhanti me matam*, ‘do not practise this teaching of mine’; *sarvajñāna vimūḍhān tān,* ‘they are deluded in all spheres of knowledge’; what happens to them?, *viddhi naṣṭān*, ‘know them to be ruined’; *acetasaḥ,* ‘who are mindless’. It is just like a *rat* entering a trap, it can also come out by the way it got in; but it does not know it, it is deluded, and only runs about in the trap. Says Śrī Kṛṣṇa: there is a *method* by which all can be free and I am giving that.

So, a great teacher comes and tells us, we have entered into this bondage, and we shall get out of it. There is a way to get out of this bondage. So, the *yoga* philosophy of the *Gītā* is a philosophy for one and all: we have to face the challenges of the world, challenge of work, challenge of all this *prakṛti,* physical nature, around and in us, and we take up that challenge, follow this teaching, and become free in this very life. That is the profound message Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving to the whole of humanity. That is why the *Gītā* is attracting the attention of working people. Lazy people cannot appreciate this teaching, only working people can. Those who work, work with zest and with joy, and, *in* work, learn calmness and the serenity of the human mind and heart; what a wonderful joy it is to work in such a way! It is like gliding. When we glide, we don’t find any pressure or friction. The wind carries us this way, that way. Life becomes a gliding as it were; or, we can also call it the hang-gliding of today. Life moves on just like that, absolutely spontaneous, natural; how?, because of the change within your system. A new element has come in, the higher nature, *adhyātma cetasā*, ‘with a spiritual attitude’. So, the whole work becomes different. Anyone can *actually* demonstrate it in one’s life. When we are untrained in mind, we work, we get tired, we get depressed, we get so many ups and downs in our mental state during the whole day. But, when you have this *adhyātma cetas,* ‘spiritual orientation of mind’, you are able to face all these difficulties better and better. Not that in one day you can

achieve it, but by applying it in various situations, you grow in spiritual strength and become able to carry more heavy burdens with a smile. This is the possibility opened up by the *Gītā* to the whole of humanity.

So, though a very ancient book, yet how modern and how thoroughly relevant it is to the times in which we live! Only truth can be relevant like that for all times, not dogmas. Great books are eternal books, immortal literature. About five thousand years ago, the *Mahābhārata* war took place. Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave this message to Arjuna. After all these thousands of years, you find it is so relevant to everyone in the amazing modern age, not only in India but also outside India. The message given to human beings: how to make him or her free; that freedom is one's birthright, it is built into each person, only he or she doesn't know how to manifest it. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is helping us to manifest that ever-present freedom that is within ourselves. That is his great message in this third chapter, known as the chapter on *karma-yoga.* Further teachings come, some more verses are there. And towards the end there is a wonderful seven-verse section dealing with the origin of crime in society and how to overcome it.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here:

सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्या: प्रकृतेर्ज्ञानवानपि।
प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रह: किं करिष्यति॥३३॥

Sadṛśam ceṣṭate svasyāḥ prakṛteḥ jñānavānapi;
Prakṛtim yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kim kariṣyati — 3. 33

'Even a wise person acts in accordance with his or her own nature; beings follow nature; what can suppression do?'

The word *prakṛti* has been used in several of these verses. We call it nature. The whole of nature outside, and the same nature within us also. This body-sense-mind complex is an evolution of the same material out of which the external nature has also evolved. That is the Vedantic teaching, and that is also modern scientific teaching. So, nature is also within us, not merely outside. Our body, our sensory system, even our psyche, are all outposts of external nature in you and me. That nature exerts a great force within us. We are pulled down by that nature to live like an ordinary animal

or beast; we must reckon with this nature. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here, even a man of knowledge is impelled by nature within to act in particular ways: *Sadṛśam ceṣṭate svasyāḥ*, 'one's own nature dictates how one shall act', what conduct one shall adopt; *prakṛti* or nature within us will dictate what we shall do, what we shall not do. Now that *prakṛti* consists of the impulses of the sensory system to go out to the external world all the time, and the mind follows the senses and also goes after the sensory pleasures outside. And by doing so, we create another type of nature within us, namely, innate tendencies, what we call *samskāras* or *vāsanas,* a beautiful scientific term in Vedantic psychology. We have these within the mind, below the conscious level, in the subconscious and unconscious mind of man, which is innate nature in its raw state. Everything is there and they try to come out, try to express themselves through our conscious mind; and, not only you and I, *jñānavān api,* 'even a person of knowledge', is dragged by these forces within. In spite of possessing knowledge, he or she is being pulled in a particular direction by these forces.

Vedanta wants people to understand what are these forces operating upon them? And Vedanta answers: there are two forces: external forces and internal forces. People neglect these internal forces. That is why they are in trouble. If we don't neglect this, and if we know how to handle these internal forces, then we can live a better and fuller life. That will be taught in the verses to follow. So, *prakṛter jñānavān api,* 'even a *jñāni,* one of knowledge, is carried away by the forces of nature' implanted within oneself. *Prakṛtim yānti bhūtāni,* 'beings follow the impulsions of nature', *nigrahaḥ kim kariṣyati,* 'what can *mere suppression* do?' You can't suppress these forces of nature. That is not the way. We have to educate them. As Sri Ramakrishna would say, 'give them a new direction', *moḍe phiriye dāo,* that is his Bengali expression. A new direction, ethical, moral, spiritual, you have to give to such impulses, and not suppress them. That is your own responsibility. When you try to do so, you need help. Then you turn to books like the *Gītā* and other spiritual books. They give you guidance in this matter. And so, it is a problem everybody has to face, human beings in particular. Animals are all controlled by nature; they don't protest against nature. You can see nature in its fullest expression in the animal. But in a human being, that nature in its outer and inner forms, is

there; but, something else is also there, the highest form of nature, the Atman. That something is the human source of freedom, the Atman manifesting through the body-mind complex as an urge for freedom: 'I want to take my life in my own hands and shape it, I don't want nature to shape it.' In this way, there is an element of freedom in every human child, which you won't find in any animal. *Vedanta therefore calls this human system as cit-jaḍa-granthi, a combination of cit and jaḍa,* that means consciousness and inert matter. These two are combined in the human system. What is inert matter, is what nature has implanted in us. What is consciousness, is also present within us in our 'higher nature', *parā prakṛti*; in evolution, it has found a higher manifestation in this human system. We are in a difficult situation. We would have no struggle in life, if that consciousness and its urge for freedom were not there, if *only* ordinary nature was there; we would then say 'yes' to every impulse. But, because that consciousness is there and it is tied to this nature, you revolt against it. All moral life, all culture, all civilization, comes out of that struggle. I want to assert my own true nature which is of the nature of pure consciousness. We are, says Vedanta, *cit-jaḍa-granthi,* the knot of *cit* and *jaḍa*, *cit* means 'consciousness', and *jaḍa* means 'unconsciousness or inertness'. Nature is inert outside. That nature has implanted itself within us; when that is strong, we are carried away. *Prakṛter jñānavānapi*, 'even a *jñāni* is subject to this pressure'.

In the *Devī Māhātmyam,* that great book of *bhakti* to the Divine Mother, there is this *śloka* (1. 55):

Jñāninām api cetāmsi devī bhagavatī hi sā;
Balād ākṛṣya mohāya mahāmāyā prayacchati —

'That Divine Mother manifesting as *Mahāmāyā,* that great delusion which is functioning in this world of manifestation, drags away even the mind of a *jñāni,* person of knowledge, towards delusive life, delusive action.'

And so we have to be careful. Everything is not easy within us. Human life is a struggle. The concept of human life as a struggle is a wonderful concept. Animals do not struggle to manifest themselves on a higher plane. We struggle. Their struggle is for mere survival, eating, drinking, and

mating; ours is not for mere survival; something within us is seeking expression and to dominate this body-mind complex. That is how we develop culture, we develop civilization: saying 'no' to nature, going beyond nature to some extent. Nature says: remain in sun and rain; the human being says, 'no', and builds a house. But even then, even a person of culture and civilization is subject to the pressures of nature. And we can see it in civilization everywhere. There is a deeper dimension to human life, not merely civilization. Civilization is only more of comfort, more of conveniences, more of gadgets. I sometimes quote a sentence from Disraeli, the British Prime Minister about a hundred years ago, who was a great scholar. There he says, 'the European talks of progress because by the aid of a few scientific discoveries, he has constructed a society which mistakes comfort for civilization.' Because we are more comfortable, we are more civilized! That is not correct. There is something higher which we have to manifest. Comfortable life is not a truly civilized life. So, the verse says: *Prakṛtim yānti bhūtāni*, 'beings follow impulsions of nature'. Most of what we are doing, are nothing but impulsions of nature, as I have said earlier quoting Carl Jung of Switzerland. In all these matters, what functions is just plain nature. But that is not the whole thing. There is such a thing as culture or personality development. There you are on your own ground. You are trying to manifest some dimension within you beyond the nature level. Out of that comes ethics, morality, and higher spiritual life.

Indian thought divides human life into four stages: *brahmacarya,* student life, *gārhastya,* married state, *vānaprastha,* retired life, *sannyāsa*, life of renunciation. The last two deal with the higher dimension in a more concentrated way. During the first two also, we shall be having something to do with the higher dimension, but the struggle of life is so strong that we cannot divert our major attention to it. But now that you have *achieved* something in life, you have got a family, you have got name, fame, everything has come to you, now it is time to develop a new philosophy for yourself. That is the philosophy of the 'afternoon' of human life. Have I *enriched myself qualitatively?* What a beautiful concept! More of peace, more of joy, more of compassion—that spiritual development must become the main activity in the afternoon of one's life. If you carry over the forenoon activities to the afternoon, what will be the result? Diminution of

personality, as quoted from Carl Jung earlier. We will become smaller and smaller day by day, because the world rejects us; nature rejects us.

Take, for example, the concept of genetics. Any organism is valuable for nature only so long as it can reproduce. As soon as it ceases to reproduce, nature has no interest in that organism. Nature may reject you, but why do *you* reject yourself? You have the capacity to take life to a higher level, higher than nature. Don't live at the nature's level all the time. This is a profound truth. In these verses, the *Gītā* is stressing this idea that much of our life is at the level of nature. We accept it, but it need not always be so. We can rescue ourselves from the bonds of nature. There is something within us, which is free. We can manifest that freedom. There comes a higher philosophy of life, and both these should not contradict each other. They follow one after the other. First is *achievement*, certainly as Jung says, a young person of twenty, instead of sitting quiet 'looking into the navel', sitting in meditation, let him or her work hard, earn money, and do other things. Otherwise, he or she will be a failure. In these verses, you get that truth expressed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa: *Sadṛśam ceṣṭate svasyāḥ prakṛteḥ; svasyāḥ prakṛteḥ sadṛśam ceṣṭate,* 'according to one's own *prakṛti* or nature, one acts'. Even the *jñāni* is forced to act accordingly. *Nigrahaḥ kim kariṣyati?,* 'what can mere suppression do? 'You suppress it here, it will come out there in another form.

You cannot destroy nature. It is there. But you must know how to handle it. A depth psychology has been used to develop the spiritual message of Vedanta. Without doing violence to human nature, we *educate nature* and go higher and higher and still higher. No direct confrontation, no suppression. Suppression has no meaning at all, because suppressed energies find a way to come out. In fact, they come out in a disguised form. That is one of the big contributions of Freud to Western human psychology: Whatever is unpleasant to you, whatever your conscience doesn't like, you just suppress it into the mind. It goes into the subconscious or unconscious. From there it comes out in a disguised form, in various forms of psychic distortions and complexes manifesting as this distorted behaviour and that distorted behaviour. You don't know what they are. A psychologist or psycho-analyst may be able to know better, and so he or she analyses and traces it to the suppressed energy which has created this distortion. So, Śrī

Kṛṣṇa says, that suppression is not the way, educate these energies; *they can be educated.*

Sri Ramakrishna puts it in a simple statement, *moḍ phiriye dāo,* 'turn the direction of these energies'. They are all centres of energy; every emotion is a centre of energy, every psychic experience is a centre of energy. That energy has to be refined and given a direction. That capacity we have. Only we must do it carefully, judiciously, not through a direct confrontation. Those who have enormous spiritual strength, they can do it with a direct confrontation. But most people cannot and should not. They will lose in the battle. That is the meaning of the statement: *nigrahaḥ kim kariṣyati,* 'merely suppressing, what can it do?' Better to work out these various tendencies, impulses, with a discriminating mind, so that you can climb higher and higher. The word discrimination, *viveka,* comes here again and again. So, this is the teaching regarding nature implanted in human beings, the same nature that is outside. That is why, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say later on that there is a similarity between the two, attraction between the two: nature outside, and my sensory and psychic system. He says in the next *śloka* 34:

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ।
तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत्तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ॥३४॥

Indriyasyendriyasyārthe rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau;
Tayorna vaśamāgacchet tau hyasya paripanthinau —3. 34

'Attachment and aversion of the sense organs for their respective sense objects are natural; let none come under their sway; they are one's highway robbers.'

Indriya and *indriyasyārtha* are two words. *Indriya* means sense organ. *Indriyasyārtha* means sense object. 'These two are related to each other', *indriyasya indriyasya arthe.* How do they get related? Through two emotions: one is called *rāga,* attachment, the other is called *dveṣa,* aversion. If it is favourable, I am attached to it; if it is unfavourable, I am averse to it. These are the ways we react to all external sensory experiences. A pleasant experience is welcome. We try to run away from the unpleasant. That is

how we behave with regard to the external sensory world. *Rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau,* '*rāga* and *dveṣa* are well established'. Our human system is well established in the sensory world through these two emotions, *rāga* and *dveṣa.* Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *tayoḥ na vaśamāgacchet,* 'don't get into their clutches'. Why?, *tau hi asya paripanthinau,* 'they are well known as one's highway robbers'. See the language: *paripanthinau.* You are going along a road, a highway robber comes and loots away all that you have. We have plenty of highway robbers today, in buses and trains, everywhere. But, everyday, in our very life, we are having this kind of highway robbers. What do they rob from us?, our discrimination, our knowledge, our wisdom. Therefore, be careful. Be alert, is the language. So, this is a warning that is given to all wayfarers' lives. We are all wayfarers. We started our lives as babies, going on in this world as a pilgrim to achieve this and that. To all of us this warning is given. You want your lives to be successful, be careful. These robbers are there. You cannot afford to be careless in your journey. Then:

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुण: परधर्मात् स्वनुष्ठितात्।
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेय: परधर्मो भयावह:॥३५॥

Śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt;
Svadharme nidhanam śreyaḥ paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ—3. 35

'Better is one's own *dharma*, though imperfect, than the *dharma* of another well performed; better is death in one's own *dharma;* another person's *dharma* is fraught with fear.'

Everyone has his or her own *dharma*, or way of life and work and human relations. According to one's psychological disposition, a person has a particular bent of mind and work capacities. That is one's *dharma*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, better to die in one's own *dharma,* than to live in somebody else's *dharma.* That *dharma* is good for that person, this is good for you. Find out your own *dharma* based on your own mental disposition. *Śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ*, 'even though one's own *dharma* is not of high quality, still it is the best for oneself'. This is a teaching based on the individual identity of every human being, like the individuality of one's thumb impression. Similarly, there is a psychic individuality. That is based on a

certain bent of life, attitudes, reactions, likes and dislikes. All these constitute one's individuality; let one respect it and not imitate somebody else; don't be ashamed of yourself. This *śloka* refers to this need on our part to have faith in ourselves, confidence in ourselves, in one's own psychological disposition. One can *change* it for the better but should not *exchange* it, should not cast yourself in the mould of somebody else. Then comes the question, 'how do we commit blunders and crimes in life?' What is the etiology of crime? This very important subject comes at the end of this third chapter. Arjuna is putting a very pertinent question on this subject:

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca—

'Arjuna said:'

अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः।
अनिच्छन्नपि वार्ष्णेय बलादिव नियोजितः॥३६॥

Atha kena prayukto'yam pāpam carati pūruṣaḥ;
Anicchannapi vārṣṇeya balādiva niyojitaḥ — 3. 36

'Then, impelled by what does a person commit sin or crime, though against one's wishes, O Kṛṣṇa, carried away, as it were, by a force?'

This is a question which everyone must be asking every now and then silently in one's mind. Arjuna is only a sample of what humanity is. Arjuna asks, 'by what impulsion does a human being commit crime?' *Atha kena prayukto'yam*. *Kena* means by what or by whom; *prayuktaḥ* means impelled by. *Pāpam carati,* 'commit sin or crime'. *Pūruṣaḥ,* 'a human being'. *Pāpam* is generally translated as sin in theology. In sociopolitical thought, *pāpam* means crime. Crime against society, crime against other human beings or other living beings. In Vedanta, we don't make much distinction between sin and crime. The question, therefore, is: why does man commit a crime or an evil deed?, bloodshed, murder, robbery; in fact we have a plentiful variety of crimes today, multiplying day by day. So, it is good to know the origin of this crime and how to eliminate it from society. In fact, in sociology and in criminology we study this subject. The *Gītā* is giving us an insight into it based on Vedantic study of the depth dimension

of the human personality through its *science of human possibilities*. *Anicchannapi*, 'even though (the person) is unwilling', says Arjuna's question; this is true of many criminals but not of all; this is reiterated by Arjuna by saying *balādiva niyojitaḥ,* 'as if impelled by some force'. These last seven verses are a depth study of the subject of crime, its etiology, and how to overcome it.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच—

Śrībhagavān uvāca—

'The Blessed Lord said.'

काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः।
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम्॥३७॥

Kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇa samudbhavaḥ;
Mahāśano mahāpāpmā viddhyenamiha vairiṇam —3. 37

'It is sensual desire, it is anger, born of the *rajo-guṇa*; of great craving and of great sin; know this as the enemy here (in human life).'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving the reply: *Kāma eṣa krodha eṣa,* 'it is *kāma*, insatiate desire, and it is *krodha,* anger'; *rajoguṇa samudbhavaḥ,* 'they are born out of the *rajo-guṇa* in human beings'; *mahāśano mahāpāpmā,* 'great consumer and great sinner'; *viddhi enam iha vairiṇam,* 'know this as the enemy here'.

Kāma is a great word. It has been treated from two points of view. In *Manu Smṛti,* there is a great praise of *kāma*. *Akāmasya kriyā nāsti,* 'without having *kāma* or desire within, one can't act at all'. All action is impelled by *kāma.* So, *kāma* is praised here. Take our own rural population, millions of them have no desire for a better life; so they live in insanitary conditions, satisfied in their illiteracy, even though there is a school nearby. They have absolutely no desire. Can we say that they have become great sages? Not at all. The first lesson, so far as they are concerned, is to stimulate desire. There is a young child; you stimulate desire in it to gain knowledge; and it goes to school and, later on, works hard to live a comparatively decent life. So, the first stage of life is *kāma.*

Similarly, *krodha,* anger; sometimes you need *krodha.* I had occasion to say earlier, how human life will be very dull without this emotion called *krodha,* as righteous indignation against social misbehaviour. *Kāma* and *krodha* have a place; but, they need discipline, regulation. They are blind forces. Then comes human education, including value awareness through ethical and moral awareness. At that stage, you are called upon to regulate *kāma* and *krodha;* you have to say 'no' to *kāma,* you have to say 'no' to *krodha*, when they overstep the limits. Then only can we live in a peaceful society of millions of people. If I am alone on an island, I don't need to control and restrain my *kāma* and *krodha.* I can go on all over the island, run about wherever I like, and take whatever I like, get angry with everything that is there. That I can do. There is no worry at all. But, in a society, because there are other human beings on whom your *kāma* and *krodha* will have effect, therefore, there is a need for restraining these two forces. And when we do not check them, they become evil forces. If you check them, they are not evil. Remember the meaning of the word *kāma*. In this very *Gītā*, in verse 11 of chapter 7, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will tell us, 'I am the *kāma* in the heart of all beings, but a *kāma* unopposed to *dharma* or ethical sense', *dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kāmo'smi bharatarṣabha.* So, *kāma* is not condemned right through. But, unrestricted *kāma*, unrestrained *kāma*, also *krodha,* and also other evils coming along with them, are our primary enemies.

Vedanta speaks of six enemies of every human being. They are all inside the human being: *Kāma, krodha, lobha,* greed; *moha,* delusion; *mada,* pride and arrogance; and *mātsarya,* jealousy. These things are known as *ṣaḍ-ripu,* 'six enemies' of every human being. The human being alone can tackle them and defeat them with spiritual strength. Of these, *kāma* and *krodha* are the most important and dangerous. Once these are controlled, the other four are easy to control. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa answers Arjuna by saying: they are two: *kāma* and *krodha.* What is their origin? A beautiful psychological study: *rajo-guṇa samudbhavaḥ,* 'they are born from the excessive *rajo-guṇa* that is within the human being. First is *tamas,* inertia. When you are in *tamas,* you neither do good nor evil. Just like this table or chair, all *tamas;* but, as soon as *rajas* manifests, it can be either good or bad; when good predominates, the human being becomes active to serve

other people; when bad predominates, excessive *kāma* and *krodha* manifest and make for harmful activities. So, we need to educate a child from *tamas* to *rajas* and to create *kāma* in that child: 'I want this, I want that, if there is an obstruction, I shall try to remove it with all my energy'. So, *kāma* and *krodha* thus become utilized for human development. The child also must be taught to restrain these two in order to make them harmless to society.

This *rajo-guṇa* and its offspring, *kāma* and *krodha,* if not properly disciplined by the person concerned, will land one in trouble. These two are *mahāśano mahāpāpmā*, 'big consumers and big sinners'. *Aśana* means eating; *mahā* means big; big eaters. That means like fire, you add fuel and it will consume more and more of fuel, never becoming satisfied; *kāma* and *krodha* are like that. You go on satisfying desire, it will always say, more, more. That is the nature of desire in human beings. Earlier I had quoted the beautiful passage from Goethe's drama, *Faust,* his soliloquy in the woods:

'Oh, for the broken state of man: I know

Our unfulfilment now! …

He builds a wildfire in my heart, a blase,

Till from desire I stumble to possession,

And in possession languish from desire.'

There you can see the meaning of *mahāśanaḥ,* desires are endless. As soon as you satisfy one, ten will rise in its place. Today, we refer to this in the economic language as need and greed. Human needs we can satisfy; human greed we cannot satisfy. In this world there are enough resources to satisfy the needs of all the four billion human beings, but not their greed; if greed operates in society, millions of people will have to go without elementary needs. That is one of the problems of the modern age. Economists, philosophers, and thinkers are stressing this point today that we should contain this greed, what is called consumerism-mania. Many writers criticise America, for example. Six percent people of the world consume forty percent of world's resources. That is America today. Americans themselves make this criticism. These are good signs. We are trying to understand the human situation better and better: that there is enough to meet the needs of the people, not enough to meet the greed of

even a small number of people; nature becomes destroyed, ecological balance becomes disturbed because of greed.

Take, for example, birds. How many birds have become extinct, because people go on hunting them, and take their feathers to make dress for men, and more especially for women. There was a bird in Mauritius called dodo. Up to two hundred years ago, it was there. Colonial people went there, went on shooting and killing them. It is a very heavy bird and cannot fly quickly to safety. So, it is extinct today. That is why in English we say, 'dead as dodo'. Whales are getting reduced and also many other species of animals. In this way, ecological balance which is needed for human survival becomes disturbed by greed. So, the word *mahāśana,* 'great consumer', is a wonderful word; it has relevance to what we think of the human situation today.

Mahāpāpmā, the second word, is what impels you to do much evil, much destruction. All sin, evil, and crime, come from these two forces: *kāma* and *krodha,* which arise from *rajo-guṇa.* Just think deeply how we can handle the *rajas* in us. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will give the method later: Moderate this *rajas* with a touch of *sattva,* give it a higher dimension. Refine it, then something great will happen. The same energy will bring blessings to hundreds of people through you. That is what doesn't happen when *kāma* and *krodha* become connected only with one's own self-interest. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *Viddhi enam iha vairiṇam*. *Iha,* 'in this human world'; *enam,* 'this'; *viddhi,* 'know'; *vairiṇam,* 'as your enemy'. That is the first answer.

Next *śloka* gives an illustration: Vedanta has discovered a divine spark in all beings, because the universe has evolved out of the infinite divine Reality. By our ignorance and delusion, we hide that 'imprisoned splendour', as the British poet Robert Browning puts it; knowledge is hidden by something; *āvriyate* is the word for 'hiding'.

धूमेनाव्रियते वह्निर्यथाऽदर्शो मलेन च।
यथोल्बेनावृतो गर्भस्तथा तेनेदमावृतम्॥३८॥

Dhūmenāvriyate vahniḥ yathā'darśo malena ca;
Yatholbenāvṛto garbhaḥ tathā tenedamāvṛtam — 3. 38

‘As fire is covered by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an embryo by the amniotic sac, so this (Reality) is covered by that (*rajas*).’

Three examples are given. This spiritual knowledge in a human being, this discriminatory capacity, is hidden in human beings. How? Just like this: *Dhūmena āvriyate vahniḥ,* ‘as fire is covered with smoke’. Similarly, *yathā ādarśo malena ca,* ‘as a mirror is covered with dirt’. And thirdly, *yatholbena āvṛto garbhaḥ*, ‘as the baby inside the womb is hidden by the amniotic sac’; *tathā tena idam āvṛtam,* ‘similarly, this (knowledge) is hidden by that (*rajo-guṇa* expressing as *kāma* and *krodha*). Having said this, the next *śloka* expressly states that the *jñāna* that is within every human being is covered by *kāma*.

आवृतं ज्ञानमेतेन ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा।
कामरूपेण कौन्तेय दुष्पूरेणानलेन च॥३९॥

āvṛtam jñānametena jñānino nityavairiṇā;
Kāmarūpeṇa kaunteya duṣpūreṇa analena ca — 3. 39

‘Knowledge is covered by this, the constant foe of the wise, O son of Kuntī, the unappeasable fire in the form of (unrestrained sensual) desire.’

This *jñāna* in human beings is hidden, is covered over, by this. By what?, by this *kāma* and *krodha* arising from *rajas* which is the human being’s *nityavairī,* ‘eternal enemy’. Unrestrained *kāma* and *krodha* are all human being’s eternal enemies. *Nityavairī* is the word used here, ‘eternal enemy’, not only once or twice but throughout life. *Jñānino*, ‘of a person of knowledge’, they hide this *jñāna,* and when the *jñāna* is hidden, the person does all sorts of blunder. *Kāmarūpeṇa kaunteya,* ‘in the form of *kāma* O Arjuna’; *duṣpūreṇa analena ca,* ‘like an unquenchable fire’. This is the teaching of the *Gītā* on the origin of crime; but we want to know how to get out of it. How can we be free from this crime and the tendency to commit crime?

In the human being, when *rajas* and *tamas* predominate, crime and similar problems arise, but as soon as the mind rises to the level of *sattva,* the whole aspect changes. The human being becomes calm, steady, peaceful, compassionate. No crime can come from that state of mind. How

do we achieve it? By each one training one's mind. Everything is in the mind; if you have a healthy mind, all that you do will be healthy. If you have an unhealthy mind, whatever you do will create tension in yourself and tension in society. *āvṛtam jñānam etena,* 'knowledge is covered by this'. Suppose I am a fine person; when I commit a crime, at that moment my knowledge of my identity, my status, all that is hidden from me for the time being. *Kāma* and *krodha* hiding the knowledge that is within me, of my own nature, of my own status. Vedanta always emphasizes this point that the human being is essentially divine. These forces hide the divine. The sun is always luminous. But a patch of cloud can cover the sun. And the sun becomes dark. Similarly, this divine nature, the knowledge of it, becomes hidden by the overwhelming nature of this *kāma* and *krodha* born of *rajas.* It is out of this that every other evil will come. We have to handle this particular problem.

We have seen that problems arise from *unchecked* desire, unchecked craving, what we call today the evil of consumerism. How much of destruction of nature is going on by that kind of consumerist philosophy! And crime in society, violence in society, we can trace them to their source, and we shall find these coming from this want of discipline of the mind. We have to train the mind to overcome the force of *kāma* that impel us to do things which in our normal mood we will never do. Hence, this particular expression, *jñānino nityavairiṇā,* these are 'the eternal enemies of one who seeks knowledge'. What impels me to act is desire. So, that desire under restraint is essential. All culture and civilization are the products of human desire. But that desire becomes disciplined when you become a cultured individual. In all culture and civilization, there is both the presence of desire and the disciplining of that desire. Society itself is a field for the discipline of desire. I can't do what causes harm to somebody else. There is civil law, there is criminal law. There is the political state and my moral conscience. All these are there to discipline this powerful force within the human being; but that desire becomes an eternal enemy of the human being, when it is not checked and disciplined properly. Your whole life becomes a waste because of this.

In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* there is the story of Yayāti, an emperor. He had a tremendous desire to live a pleasant life, a happy life, a worldly life.

He did it; he became old. He wanted to become young once again; he asked his son for his youth. One of the sons gave to him his youth and took his old age to himself. Again the emperor continued to enjoy pleasures, and again he became old. Then he began to think a little: the body has become old for a second time. Desire is still fresh like that of a young boy. Desire has not become old. It is always fresh. So, a little thoughtful mood came upon him and he pronounced a great piece of wisdom in a beautiful verse:

Na jātu kāmaḥ kāmānām upabhogena śāmyati;
Haviṣā kṛṣṇavartmeva bhūya eva abhivardhate —

'Desire is not quenched by the satisfying of desire; it only gets inflamed like fire into which butter is poured (to put it out).'

This is a profound wisdom that came to India very early in her history.

Today the world is seeking for that wisdom. Today's civilization is suffering from the same problem: simply craving for new things, new gadgets, and an efficient technology provides them, destroying the resources of nature, creating ecological problems and difficulties. In a materialistic philosophy there is nothing higher than these sensory cravings and their satisfaction. A more comprehensive philosophy of human life and destiny is needed and that is what the *Gītā* gives. It does not merely say to the human being 'control your desire'. It says, 'divert your desire to something higher'. The sensory craving and satisfaction is not the highest state of a human being. There is human growth beyond and above the sensory level. The *Gītā* does not leave a human being as a dry ascetic person. But it says, 'there are other heights to conquer. Don't get stuck up at this particular level.' Today's civilization is silently seeking for that wisdom. So, this Yayāti's wisdom is echoed in much of modern writing on the subject of the problems of modern civilization. *Na jātu kāmaḥ kāmānām*. *Jātu* means 'never'. Never is *kāma* satisfied through enjoyment of *kāma.* It only multiplies just as fire inflames when you try to put it out by butter. That is the wisdom that finds expression in some modern writings.

I like to quote a sentence from a commission's report in the United States. Just after the Second World War, a *Hoover Committee commission* was appointed to study the 'recent' economic trends in the United States. In

the report of that Commission occurs this sentence which echoes what Yayāti said ages ago in India, minus the spirit in which Yayāti said it: 'This study has revealed that human desires are endless.' That is the first sentence. And the second sentence is that 'there are no new desires which will not give way to newer desires as soon as they are satisfied.' That is the nature of the human mind. So, what shall I do? Shall I go on flowing with the current of desire in the world of desire? No. But that wisdom has yet to come to modern thinking. Modern thinking has no inkling about the super-sensory level of experience. That second part, a positive part, is given in this *Bhagavad Gītā* as well as in the Upaniṣads. This kind of teaching about the spiritual dimensions of human life is slowly coming into modern scientific thought, especially in neurology and biology. Modern biology will tell you that organic satisfaction is not the goal of evolution at the human stage. That is the goal of the pre-human phase of evolution. That one sentence is enough to tell us that modern biology is going in the right direction: that, in a pre-human phase, evolution emphasized three things—organic satisfaction, numerical increase, and organic survival. Today's biology says that these are secondary at the human level; something else is primary. And what is that? *Fulfilment.* Are you fulfilled? If you are to achieve that fulfilment, you will have to do many things which earlier biology never understood at all. We have to achieve a new type of evolution beyond the organic dimension—such is the language. Organic evolution has brought us up to this level. It has given us the most versatile organ, the cerebral system. With the help of this you can create any gadgets you like: just like creating the aeroplane, instead of developing two wings on your body. So, if organic evolution has no relevance at the human level, what exactly is the trend of human evolution?

To that question British biologist Sir Julian Huxley gave a reply in his address to the Chicago Congress of Scientists in 1959, celebrating Darwin's Centenary. He said, '*evolution has risen from the organic to the psychosocial level*'. This psyche must be able to expand beyond this organic system and dig affections in other psyches in society. That is love. That is compassion. That is humanist concern. You grow spiritually thereby. This is a wonderful idea. So, today's biology is slowly giving us a positive direction to human energy, not merely negative; and that is the central

theme of Vedanta. How to raise this human being to the highest possibility, he or she is capable of. We in India, ages ago, developed in the Upaniṣads a *science of human possibilities*. And this is a phrase coined by that very Sir Julian Huxley. 'Today we need a new science,' other than the current physical science, he had said, and he called it: 'A science of human possibilities'. To take the human being to that highest level of evolution, the guidance of that science is needed. When you study Vedanta, when you study the *Gītā*, you find that they are exactly that science of human possibilities.

Take, for example, hatred. We can overcome hatred. That is a *human* possibility. Hatred also is a human possibility; and controlling hatred is again a human possibility. Similarly, desire, craving, that is a human possibility; controlling it and transforming its energies to a higher level, also is a human possibility. So, Vedanta developed a science of human possibilities ages ago. These few verses are the offshoots of that science.

What does that science say on this particular question of crime in society? How shall we reduce crime? One method we all have: increase the police force! Pass laws and regulations in the Parliament. That is what we do all the time. But today we realize that it is absolutely incapable of achieving the result. The human being cannot be made moral by an Act of Parliament. That is a great lesson we have to learn. *There is such a thing as human spiritual growth*. Education is meant to help us to start that spiritual growth and become decent citizens who can live at peace with other citizens in society. That doesn't come from an Act of Parliament. It comes from education. Education actually means, in the language of Vivekananda, 'manifestation of the perfection already in the human being'. We are to unfold those beautiful possibilities hidden within ourselves, so that peacefulness, humanist concern, a spirit of dedication and service, all these can come from within ourselves, if only we know how to handle this wonderful thing called the human mind. All education is, therefore, the training of the mind and not stuffing of the brain. Nowhere in the world today is education of this kind; of training of the mind. Mostly, it is stuffing of the brain. And ours in India is the worst from that point of view. These lessons from the *Gītā*, from this great master-teacher, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, we need

very much today. We have got the most untrained minds in India. A little self-discipline will transform our people.

From now onwards, as Swami Vivekananda has taught us, we in India have to place the first emphasis on the training of the mind. You go to the temple, did you train your mind there? Could you compose yourself and remain calm and steady? In this way, the whole of life becomes the training of the mind. When you train the mind, you are the master. If you don't train the mind, you become a slave. And when you become a criminal, you become a slave to your own natural instincts or *vāsanas*. This subject of training the mind is not meant merely for school and college students. Every citizen in every field of life, whether alone or in the field of work, must be busy with this one work: to train this mind so that efficiency may increase and self-restraint gained. When I begin to understand the mind and its functioning, I come across these forces of *kāma* and *krodha* acting in me. There is no devil coming from outside to trouble me. The 'devil' is inside me only. That is why, in our literature, there is no place for the devil. You are the 'devil' within. You must be able to control him, direct him. This is why training the mind is most important for everyone.

Śaṅkarācārya's statement in the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, verse 181, says: *Tanmanaḥ śodhanam kāryam prayatnena mumukṣuṇā,* 'those who seek to have freedom of spirit, must train the mind with great effort'*; viśuddhe sati caitasmin muktiḥ karaphalāyate*, 'when the mind becomes pure, then *mukti,* liberation, becomes palpable like a fruit in the palm of one's hand'. You can feel it: 'Yes, I am free, I am free'. How?, the mind is trained. The mind is pure. Freedom, which is my birthright, I have got it today. Till now it was not experienced by me. So, this energy of *rajas* and *tamas* which motivate the mind towards *kāma* and *krodha,* that energy has to be transformed into *sattva.* I have to do it myself. Nobody else can do it for me. A boy or girl of twelve can be given advice by his or her parents; but, the work of training the mind has to be done by himself or herself. Nobody can train another's mind. That is expressed in the English saying: you can take a horse to the water, but cannot make it drink. So, this is how parents must tell children, 'I can help you, but the training of the mind you have to do yourself'. This is a *constant* process, this training of the mind—in work, in leisure, in human association, everywhere we are training the mind, silently, quietly, provided

we know the *science and technique* of it, and the *need* for it. That is what is lacking today. *We don't know the need for it*. We just go headlong propelled by our inner nature; whatever the mind says, I do that; and the mind follows whatever the sense organs say. Mind is a servant of the sense organs. So, the ultimate dictate comes from the sense organs; that is unnatural and must be reversed; the mind must regulate the sense organs. The head of the dog must wag the tail, not the tail the head! And in verse 40, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us where these evil forces are functioning within the human system. *Where* is your enemy? If you want to attack your enemy, you must know his location. That is the language. Just like a general, pointing with his finger and giving the order to his army: 'Go and capture that fort, a very strategic fort!, then you will be able to win the war.' Similarly, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna, and you and me, that here are the centres where the enemy is functioning; you can attack the enemy there. What are those centres? In verse 40 Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives you the direction:

इन्द्रियाणि मनो बुद्धिरस्याधिष्ठानमुच्यते।
एतैर्विमोहयत्येष ज्ञानमावृत्य देहिनम्॥४०॥

Indriyāṇi mano buddhiḥ asyādhiṣṭhānamucyate;
Etaiḥ vimohayatyeṣa jñānamāvṛtya dehinam — 3. 40

'The sense organs, the mind and the intellect are said to be its abodes; through these it deludes the embodied soul by veiling its wisdom.'

Indriya, manas, buddhi—these three factors in the human personality are the centres where this infection takes place. Just like in medical science we ask, what is the focus of infection? Then we can apply the remedy to remove that toxin and restore the body to health. So, within the human system, crime and many other evils affecting society proceed from the sense organs, the mind and the intellect. The human body is animated by the sensory system; actually the nervous system behind the sensory organs. That is the first focus of infection from which all other evils come. Second is the mind, *manas.* That also catches the infection in course of time, if you don't take care. And lastly the *buddhi,* the intellect, the discriminative faculty, that which distinguishes between what is right and what is wrong. That *buddhi* also becomes infected destroying its discriminative capacity. It

is *buddhi* that ultimately destroys our life when it is thoroughly infected. If it is not infected, then it can save us also. So, we have to find the location of our enemy in these three areas of the human personality. *Etaiḥ vimohayatyeṣa jñānam āvṛtya dehinam,* 'evil deludes these three focal points in the human system—senses, mind and intellect—and covers *jñānam,* spiritual knowledge, of the embodied being.' *Etaiḥ vimohayati*, 'these are deluded'; without delusion, you don't do anything wrong. When you are in clear thinking, you never do anything wrong. When you do any wrong, there is a delusion behind it. The outermost is the *indriyas,* innermost is *buddhi,* and in between is *manas.*

In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* Yama had told Naciketa: 'Life is a journey to fulfilment, every human being has been properly equipped for this journey. What do you want for a journey? You want a chariot, you want horses, you want reins, you want a driver. Then you can have a beautiful journey.' Nature has given you all these equipments. Body is the chariot, sensory system are the horses; motive power of the journey is in the horses—not in the chariot. So, here is the sensory system, full of energy. Then, to control the sensory system is the *manas,* like the reins to control the horses. And the reins are held by the charioteer, the driver; that is *buddhi. Buddhim tu sārathim viddhi,* 'know *buddhi* to be the driver of the chariot', Yama said there. And Yama warns us that if this journey is to take us to the destination, we must take one particular wisdom with us: Let not the journey be controlled by the sensory system, namely, the horses; nor by the reins, the *manas.* The journey must be controlled by the *buddhi,* the driver, the charioteer. These are all energies to be controlled and directed by the *buddhi.* But if each one of them becomes infected, *buddhi* also becomes infected, then you never reach the end of the journey. You will suffer 'shipwreck' in your journey. Yama had said this in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad.* That idea must be kept in view here.

Here is the beautiful equipment in our human system, the sensory system with the nervous system and the brain. It converts this human body into a centre of the most dynamic activity in the whole of nature. What tremendous energy is functioning there! But we have to guide that energy, discipline that energy, and direct it to higher purposes. That is where your free individual effort comes in. If you don't do so, these energies will be

lost in self-cancelling activities. *A* cancels *B, B* cancels *A,* you remain where you are, or you go down! Therefore, there is need for masterly handling of the whole energy system within yourself. Energy, controlled, disciplined, directed, increases in quantity and quality. We can see it in ordinary physical energy also. A disciplined energy is greater in quality and quantity. The waterfall shows the tremendous energy of water. And it goes away and is dissipated. But as soon as you discipline that energy and produce electricity and divert its waters along irrigation channels, you get power and increased agricultural production. Therefore, in this human system, this system of five sense organs is the centre of tremendous energy, but energy *without* direction. There comes the *manas*. The first instrument holding together all these energies and co-ordinating all the five senses is the *manas*. It also is like a sensory system, the sixth sense and slightly more subtle. It has the capacity, like the reins, to control this energy of the 'horses'. A tough rein is needed to control a very reckless horse. So, let the senses be dynamic, as in young people. But don't let it function independently; then it will be the horse's journey and not your journey. So, tie the reins to the horses. Then only you can carry that energy in a direction which *you* consider to be worthy. Otherwise, it will be horse's own journey with you as a helpless victim. *Manas* is what helps us to co-ordinate the sensory system, and *buddhi* is the one that regulates and directs all this energy. *Buddhi* must be sound, discriminative. You don't entrust your journey to a drunken driver of a carriage. You are sure to lose your life on the way. *Buddhi* must be perfectly calm and steady. That is the greatest purpose of education: to make this *buddhi*, balanced, discriminative, and with a capacity for clear thinking; then life gets the best guidance. Such a *Buddhi* is the safest guide of human life. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has already told us in chapter 2, *śloka* 49: *buddhau śaraṇam anviccha,* 'take refuge in *buddhi*'. If not, all energy with us will run helter skelter, ruin our life, and ruin society as well. We see this in increasing violence, increasing crime, all over India today, all over the world today, because we have not done anything particular in this field. And many of those who commit violence and crime are educated people! We don't even like to restrain any energy in us. Let us live at our impulse level, at our sensory level. Let us give it free rein. That is the fruit of the materialistic philosophy by which most people live today.

When I was on an 18-month cultural lecture tour of U.S.A. in 1968–69, I had the occasion to speak about this need for discipline of the energies within the human system. I was speaking over the Portland Radio at night 10 o'clock. A twenty minute radio programme, originally fixed, became a two-hour programme, because Mr. Fenwick, the radio broadcaster, deeply affected by the current Hippy movement, found the subject very interesting. I had referred to the need for disciplining of the energies within the human being; immediately, the broadcaster shouted into the radio: 'We don't want discipline; we want a spontaneous natural life.' I told him: 'You were praising Pandit Ravi Shankar's music, how natural, how spontaneous! Did you ever consider the years of discipline Ravi Shankar had to undergo to become such a great musician? Don't we give a little toilet discipline to our children? We don't give any such toilet discipline to a calf or a goat.' Extremely happy to hear these words of mine, he literally shouted into the radio: 'Listen to this great person from India,' and asked me: 'Are you tired? Can we continue?' By that time the announced twenty minutes were over. I agreed to continue, and it continued till midnight. And he and his wife came to hear my public lecture at the Portland Vedanta Society the very next Sunday!

Vedanta accepts that a natural, spontaneous life is the best for human beings; but you won't get this without passing through the hell of discipline. Otherwise, it will be animal nature and nothing else. Then, I had quoted a relevant verse from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (3. 7. 17):

Yaśca mūḍhatamo loke yaśca buddeḥ param gataḥ;
Tāvubhau sukhamedhete kliśyatyantarito janaḥ —

'Two types of people in the world enjoy happiness (and spontaneous living)—the utter foolish person and the one who has gone beyond *buddhi* (and realized the Atman); all people in between are in varying stages of struggle and tension.'

We first pass through the struggle, we discipline the energies of the sensory system through the help of the *manas* and *buddhi.* Then we come to a second type of naturalness. That is a real naturalness, a naturalness of a Ramaṇa Maharṣi, for example. A Sri Ramakrishna was natural and spontaneous. The American youth at that time, at the time of the hippie

movement, were eager to have naturalness. No more of tension, no more of discipline. They didn't like all this. Perfectly right; but if the youth want to get the true type of naturalness, they would have to pass through a life of discipline of the inner energies. Without getting this guidance, the hippy movement in U.S.A. slowly gravitated towards crime, drug, and sheer laziness, and finally died away. What they told me in America about that movement was this: 'we like to follow an impulse-release philosophy.' They did not want to control any impulse; just release impulses as they come. Such a philosophy will eventually convert human society into an animal farm', I said. All impulses are not meant to be released. You have to discriminate which is worth releasing and which is not. When you become truly 'spiritually strong', then you can release all impulses because they will always be pure, coming from the depth of the human spirit, not from the lower sensory level, not from the toxic level.

That is the background of these beautiful ideas Śrī Kṛṣṇa is conveying to us on this most important problem of civil peace in society. Unless there is peace, how can we enjoy human life? Unless I trust you, how can I enjoy my life?, and how can you enjoy your life? That comes from this disciplining and training of the raw energies that are within us. Chasten them, purify them, transform them into something better and better. Socialization is a great word in sociology. A human child is to be socialized, fit to be a member of a community, with a capacity to dig affections in each other. That comes from discipline of this raw human energy system. If you don't do so, you will have a society with increasing numbers of criminals and disjointed people, mentally distorted people. Nobody wants that kind of society. But, today it is going in that direction. We have to change it. It is in this context that these verses become of supreme significance to modern humanity. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *etaiḥ vimohayatyeṣa jñānam āvṛtya dehinam,* '*Jñāna* is hidden by these forces controlling *manas, buddhi* and *indriyas,* and delusion sets in.*'* These three locations have been shown here to us. The next three verses convey great insight into the human depth psychology. Nowhere else you will find this kind of a deep study of the human system and light being thrown on man's life progressing in the direction of the fullest manifestation of spiritual possibilities lying within. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

तस्मात्त्वमिन्द्रियाण्यादौ नियम्य भरतर्षभ।
पाप्मानं प्रजहिह्येनं ज्ञानविज्ञाननाशनम्॥४१॥

Tasmāt tvamindriyāṇyādau niyamya bharatarṣabha;
Pāpmānam prajahi hyenam jñānavijñāna nāśanam —3. 41

'Therefore, O Bull of the Bharata race, controlling the senses as the first step, kill this sinful factor, the destroyer of knowledge and realization.'

'Therefore, Arjuna, first discipline your sensory system.' That is the doorway through which all infection comes in. Wonderful idea! Wherefrom has this infection entered my body? You must find out. A medical doctor will ask that. Then try to stop that source of infection. So here, psychically, infection doesn't come from *buddhi.* It comes first from the sensory system. Therefore, regulate the sensory energy system, discipline them. *Tasmāt tvam indriyāṇyādau niyamya,* 'therefore you first regulate and discipline the sensory energies'. *ādau* means 'first'. Then, *pāpmānam prajahi hyenam,* 'this *pāpmānam,* this sinner, this criminal that is within you, overcome it'. I won't allow any infection to enter into me through the doorway of the sensory system. I shall regulate them; I shall discipline them. What is that evil or infection that enters through the sensory system? *Jñāna vijñāna nāśanam,* 'the destroyer of spiritual knowledge and wisdom'. If you don't take care of it in the beginning itself, it will go on increasing like cancer. A few cancer cells get in and develop until it becomes incurable. *Prajahi,* 'conquer' is the word. *Enam,* 'this', pointing it out, it is so palpable. Just like in the physical body, we have infection: we can isolate that infection, examine the blood, examine the stool and urine, and discover the focus of infection and apply treatment. In the psychic system also it is the same method: *enam,* 'this', this well-known evil that is there. Your sensory system has become infected. Take care! From there every evil starts. This is the warning that is given by Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *Jñāna-vijñāna-nāśanam,* 'destroyer of *jñāna* and *vijñāna*'.

Then comes a beautiful study of the depth dimensions of the human personality. You must know what are the dimensions of this human individual system. This is a wonderful study in the Upaniṣads, and also here in this chapter of the *Gītā*. This *śloka* is only one here, it will be two in the

Kaṭha Upaniṣad. But this one is a beautiful summary of the whole description of the dimensions of the human personality.

Take, for example, our body. Skin itself has so many layers. Then below the skin you begin to see the flesh. Then the veins and the arteries. Then you have the nerves and the bony system. Within the bone you have the marrow. So, you can see within the physical system various layers: one inside the other. Similarly, taking human being as a whole, our Upaniṣads made a study. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* is a special study of this subject. They call it the Science of five *kośas, pañca kośa vidyā*. Five *kośas* are there. *Kośa* means a sheath; place a sword in its sheath. Here is the Self, ever pure, ever free, and ever illumined; that Self is covered by five sheaths. Not just one. Begin with the body, *annamaya kośa.* Then *prāṇamaya kośa, Prāṇa*, 'vital energy'; *Manomaya kośa,* 'psychic energy'; then, '*buddhi', Vijñānamaya kośa.* And lastly, 'bliss', *ānandamaya kośa.* These are the five *kośas* inside which is your true Self, the Atman, hidden in all of them. It is good to know this truth.

So, here we are referring to three of these *kośas*. First, the *indriyas,* the sensory system, bio-energy system. *Indriyāṇi parāṇyāhuḥ,* 'these *indriyas* are very high in quality', compared to the body which is a dead dull piece of matter; what makes the body alive are these sensory energies. They are certainly superior, *parā,* compared to the body or the matter that constitutes the world outside. The word *parā* is used here. *Parā* means higher, superior. *Indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ,* '*manas* is superior to the sensory energy system'. And then, *manasastu parā buddhiḥ,* 'superior to, higher than the *manas* is the *buddhi*'. So you can see the gradation: ordinary, higher, still higher. So, these are the words used regarding the three. Then, what is beyond the *buddhi?* Only one truth is beyond the *buddhi.* What is that?, the Atman, the infinite Self. *Yo buddheḥ paratastu saḥ,* 'the one who is beyond the *buddhi,* higher than the *buddhi*, is He, the infinite Atman, which is beyond all gender distinctions, your true Self, hidden by all these three sheaths.

This is a great subject of utmost significance to the human being in this marvellous age of scientific civilization. We know so much about the world, we know much about things that are *there*, but we know so little of what is

hidden in the human being. Even Sir Julian Huxley had said, 'the study of the mind has just begun', whereas Vedanta had penetrated deep into this subject a few thousand years ago. So, what we know of matter from surface to depth from physical science, we shall retain; that is a wonderful knowledge. But it must be complemented, sustained, and strengthened by this other knowledge: what is the depth dimension of the human personality? If that knowledge also is achieved, we shall have a wonderfully stable and rich civilization. Where quantity is the criterion today in civilization, quality will become the criterion when this knowledge comes to us. And that is the direction of today's science and even of the process of civilization itself. That is why Vedanta is so relevant to human beings today in both East and West. It is a subject of tremendous significance. I have seen people in Western countries sitting with utmost interest to listen to and understand this subject. 'We know so little about it. We want to know more about it.' What Sir Julian Huxley said is true. We have only scratched the surface of this subject so far. But here is a philosophy that has gone deep into it. The insight and wisdom of that philosophy is highly necessary today for humanity to face and overcome problems in this twentieth and the following centuries.

'Discipline the sensory energies', *niyamya*. The text doesn't say 'suppress', or 'destroy'; it says 'regulate'. *Niyama* means regulation. Without it you cannot build up your character, your personality, or achieve life's fulfilment. Animals never discipline the sensory system. They have got a natural discipline, as I said earlier, built into their genetic constitution. Man alone can consciously discipline sensory energies. When the mind becomes infected, it is very difficult to handle that infection, and still further, when the *buddhi* becomes infected, the only instrument we have for *viveka* discrimination or handling that infection becomes still more difficult. We see not only intelligence at the level of *buddhi,* but also the will. A combination of intelligence and will is what makes for *buddhi.* So, the *buddhi* decides finally according to the infection that has come to it. Then it becomes extremely difficult to handle the problems. Better to do it in the early stage at the sensory level.

When I was in Tokyo in 1986, they had arranged for me a lecture along with a luncheon. And the subject there was *Children, Humanity's Greatest*

Asset. That lecture was published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay. The most important asset is our children, not the house, nor the bank account; these are all secondary. The primary asset is our children. If they are healthy, if they are in a well-balanced disposition, we are happy, they are happy, and the world is happy. If they go wrong, all are unhappy. So we have to protect the health of our children, physical as well as psychic. And today there is a great need for psychic health of children and to protect that psychic health. In advanced countries, physically children are well-fed, well looked after, they get all the calories they need in food; but their greatest problem is infection of the senses and the mind; distortion of the mind starts very early in life.

Earlier, I referred to my Portland radio lecture. I give below a little background of the theme discussed there. I saw young people following a particular philosophy in America. They called it *impulse release* philosophy. Whatever impulses arise in the mind, give a quick release for it. Don't check it, don't control it. That is the impulse release philosophy, against which I was arguing in that radio talk. Several youths in the U.S.A. accept this impulse release philosophy. Parents also accept it. Teachers accept it. Psychologists accept it. And they tell children, if you are deprived of the free expression of your impulses, it will be dangerous for your personality. You will get a traumatic condition. The word trauma is used there. If you check your impulses, you will have a trauma. And a series of traumas will be bad for the child. That is a strange new doctrine that has come in modern civilization, against which I was trying to argue: that some impulses are worth releasing, but not all impulses. Some ought to be checked. Why do you get trauma?, because of some spiritual weakness within. We are mentally very delicate today. Our spiritual strength is nil. A little scolding will make a man go and commit suicide. That kind of weakness you find in people today, even in India. Extremely sensitive; that is inner spiritual weakness. So, certain impulses need checking. Otherwise, you won't be a human being. You will be an animal. That idea I put forth in that discussion. And the interviewer was very happy. He had not heard these things. So, I said: 'Here is an impulse. I check it. I verify it. It has come as a result of a sensory system coming in contact with sensory objects. The impulses come. But discriminate them, that is absolutely

essential. Otherwise, a worse distortion will come to the human psyche, which will, later on, be beyond your control. You must be able to withstand a little bit of this trauma. You must have inner strength, knowing that it is needed at the human level. Human life is a struggle; animals have no struggle.

The human being is a combination of necessity and freedom. We are partly determined by nature, partly we are free. A little bit of that freedom in us makes us restless. The human being is the only restless being in God's creation: that little freedom in me wants to find expression. So many things are thwarting me all the time. So, a combination of freedom and necessity makes a human being a unique creature in the whole of nature. We are asked to take charge of this little freedom and let it not become a slave to the senses, which is no freedom at all. That we were already as an animal. When we have risen to the human level, we want to be free, to be unlike an animal which only says 'yes' to whatever the sensory system tells it. We are asked to discipline the sensory energies without which no higher development is possible. The human being alone can have that higher development. And so this 40th *śloka* tells us: *Tasmāt tvamindiryāṇyādau niyamya bharatarṣabha,* 'therefore, O Arjuna, you discipline the sensory system first', you can overcome all the unhealthy developments that may come later. Then only you will be free from that infection 'which otherwise will destroy your *jñāna* and *vijñāna*', *jñānavijñānanāśanam.*

In any study of crime and criminal behaviour, we can see the operation of these truths mentioned here clearly. When I commit a crime, that crime has behind it a series of changes taking place in my system. That is being studied in this chapter. And here is the advice given by Śrī Kṛṣṇa. First handle the sensory system. As a human being, if you want to develop character, if you want to realize your higher potentialities, you must discipline this tremendous energy system known as the senses. It is like controlling the horse to ensure a safe journey. Then what happens? When the sensory system is free from infection, mind remains healthy, and *buddhi* remains healthy. Your pursuit of human excellence becomes a success. Human excellence is the goal. There are profound possibilities lying hidden within us. We have to unveil them. All that is needed is this initial discipline of the sensory system.

Now we take up verse 42. That is a wonderful verse. It gives you an idea of various layers of the human personality. We look like simple individuals; we are not! So many layers are there. Just like the skin, as I said earlier, which has many layers. We see only one skin. But an anatomist can see various layers of the skin.

इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहुरिन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः।
मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्यो बुद्धेः परतस्तु सः॥४२॥

Indriyāṇi parāṇyāhuḥ indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ;
Manasastu parā buddhiḥ yo buddheḥ paratastu saḥ —3. 42

'The sense organs are said to be superior (to the body); the mind is superior to the sense organs; the buddhi or intellect is superior to the mind; and that which is superior to the intellect is He (the ever-free Self, the Atman).'

In one simple verse the *Gītā* gives you the entire knowledge, as referred to earlier, contained in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad,* which is a special study of these various layers of the human individuality.

There is one key word coming in this enumeration, the word *parā. Parā* always means superior, greater, better, higher. So, *indriyāṇi parāṇyāhuḥ,* 'the sense organs are superior, it is said'. *Indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ,* '*manas* is superior to the sensory system'. *Manas* is meant to control and regulate the sensory system. That is certainly higher and superior in value. *Manasastu parā buddhiḥ,* '*buddhi* is superior to *manas*', because it is meant to control the *manas* and the sense organs also. What lies beyond the *buddhi, yo buddheḥ parataḥ tu saḥ,* 'what is superior to the *buddhi* is He (the Atman)'. The word *saḥ* literally means 'He' (not in gender sense).

Śaṅkarācārya in his *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1. 4. 7) commentary says that 'the Ultimate Reality, of the nature of pure Consciousness, infinite and non-dual, cannot be limited by any name, even by the words Atman and Brahman'.

Just behind the *buddhi* is the Atman. This truth of Atman or Brahman is referred to in Vedanta in various ways. *Om tat sat,* 'Om That Truth'. Similarly, *Tat tvam asi*, 'You are That'. A special feature of that Truth is: It

is ever pure, ever free, ever luminous. That is the supreme teaching of Vedanta. No sin can affect the Atman. No infection can touch the Atman. That is why it is called ever free. It is only in Vedanta, and in all the teachings of mystics of the world religions, you will get this teaching: Sufi, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu. The mystics have experienced the truth, and will always say that the Self in the human being is always pure, ever free, ever illumined. All infections come from lower levels. They never reach there. That is a profound truth and also the most inspiring truth for humanity. If everything is dirty, how can you remove dirt? Suppose there is so much of dirt around you, and you go to take water to wash it; that water is also dirty. How can you then remove dirt? There must be some clean water to remove the dirt. So, in this Vedantic thinking, as a result of penetration to the innermost Self of all, the sages discovered the pure, infinite Self behind the body-mind-*buddhi* complex.

In his *Brahma-Sutra* Commentary, Śaṅkarācārya refers to it as, *nityaśuddha, nityamukta, nityabuddha svabhāva paramātman,* 'that supreme Self which is *nityaśuddha,* ever pure, *nityamukta,* ever free, *nityabuddha,* ever illumined'. It is only the ego, which is the Atman tied to the body-mind complex, that is subject to evils like crime, sin, etc. Within us both these dimensions are there. The one that is subject to joys, sorrows, crime—that is the little ego controlled by the genetic system. The other is the ever pure, ever free, ever illumined Atman. How beautifully the Upaniṣads describe this remarkable phenomenon in the human being by giving the example of two birds on the self same tree (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad,* 3. 1. 2):

Dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā
samānam vṛkṣam pariṣasvajāte;
Tayoranyaḥ pippalam svādvatti
anaśnan anyo abhicākaśīti —

'On the self-same tree are two beautiful birds, intimate friends, with fine plumage. Among the two, one bird tastes the fruits of the tree, while the other sits in its own glory without eating the fruits.'

That is the *jīva* or individual soul and Atman within the same tree of the body. It is the first bird, the *jīva,* that suffers and enjoys, that does crime,

that does good, etc. We feel that we are that, but our true nature is that of the other bird. The teaching given therefore to this lower self is: 'you are really That'. This you are because you are tied down to the body-mind complex. In Vedanta therefore, this penetrating investigation into what may be called the science of human possibilities, revealed this truth before the luminous mind of the sages: *there is the possibility of our redemption built into each one of us;* that is the Vedantic teaching. We never say, therefore, that any human being is a sinner. Nowhere in the Vedantic teaching will you find the idea that the human being is a sinner. He or she commits sin, no doubt. But he or she is not a sinner. Because, not knowing one's true nature, one commits sin; but our redemption is also built into each one of us. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to tell us in the last verse of this chapter.

Swami Vivekananda referred to this great truth while addressing the Chicago World Parliament of Religions in 1893 (*Complete Works,* vol. 1, p. 10):

Is man a tiny boat in a tempest, raised one moment on the foamy crest of a billow and dashed down into a yawning chasm the next, rolling to and fro at the mercy of good and bad actions. … The heart sinks at the idea, yet this is the law of Nature. Is there no hope? Is there no escape?—was the cry that went up from the bottom of the heart of despair. It reached the throne of mercy, and words of hope and consolation came down and inspired a Vedic sage, and he stood up before the world and in trumpet voice proclaimed the glad tidings:

"Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! Even ye that reside in higher spheres! I have found the Ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion: knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again."

"Children of immortal bliss"—what a sweet, what a hopeful name! Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name—heirs of immortal bliss—yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the Children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.'

This Vedic sage of the *Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad* could say like the Greek Archimedes 'Eureka! Eureka!'. 'I have discovered a wonderful Truth.' And when Swami Vivekananda pronounced the meaning of that verse before that American audience as quoted before, he carried the force of that tremendous discovery on to the people. 'Please listen', *śṛṇvantu. Viśve* means 'of the universe', everywhere. And the sage addressed humanity from *his* point of view: *amṛtasya putrāḥ,* 'children of immortality!' O Ye!, Children of Immortality! Listen to me, I have good news to tell you. Not only that, see the audacity arising from the all-comprehensive vision of the sage; he sends up his message 'to gods and angels in heaven if there are any', *āye dhāmāni divyāni tastuḥ.* What is that message? Did you get it from some books, or you built it up by your fertile imagination? No! *Veda aham etam.* 'I *know* this Truth'. I have realized, experienced this Truth. This *Vedāhametam* idea is the wonderful truth that has inspired all subsequent developments of religion in India, but we do not understand it today, we have made religion a dead letter. It is not 'I believe', but, '*I have realized It*'. I have experienced It. He is going to tell later on: 'You too can realize It'. What is That? *Puruṣam mahāntam,* 'the infinite human being behind the finite human being'. *Alpa* and *mahā*, two Sanskrit words meaning small and big. The ego is *alpa,* and the Atman is *mahā*. When we are *alpa,* we are prone to crime; when we are *mahā,* that cannot happen. And all crime, all delinquency come from this self which is *alpa,* not knowing one's *mahān* or immense nature. Gandhiji was called *mahātmā.* Everyone can be a *mahātmā.* That is our birthright. So, the sage says: 'I have realized that infinite Self behind this finite self.' *Vedāhametam puruṣam mahāntam. āditya varṇam,* 'glorious or luminous like the sun', *tamasaḥ parastāt,* 'beyond all darkness and delusion'. That is the Truth I have realized. But he did not then say, 'you only believe me to be saved'. He said: *tam eva viditvā atimṛtyumeti,* 'you also realize this Truth to become immortal', because It is your own birthright. You have not to beg and borrow this Truth from somebody else.

Never will you find in the world's literature such authentic utterance of human greatness and glory as in the Upaniṣads. It is said with such conviction which carries conviction to the listener. Having said this, the sage added: *nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya,* 'there is no other way, there is

no other way to freedom'. See the language: *nānyaḥ panthā vidyate,* 'there is no other way'. Realizing this truth even a little, even a glimpse of it, can change your life. Today, I am a corrupt individual. I get a glimpse of this truth through some person or other; my life becomes changed into an honest person inspired with an attitude of service to humanity.

About five hundred years ago, there lived in Karnataka a miserly jewel-merchant whose later name is Purandara Dāsa, 'servant of the Lord Viṣṇu of Paṇḍarpur'. He will not give any money to help anyone in need. That person, by one divine touch, became completely transformed. He called the people around, distributed all his wealth, all the ornaments that were there, and taking out a small bundle, started out as a *dāsa,* a servant of the divine, servant of man, singing gloriously divine songs with philosophical and spiritual ideas to awaken humanity; that Purandara Dāsa inspires people even today. What happened to him? He had found the pearl of great price within himself; all these worldly things became utterly meaningless to him, that very message he conveyed to uncommon and common people in such beautiful Kannada language, and in high music. Purandara Dāsa is one among hundreds of such people. That will make modern civilization healthy and stable.

In a Buddha, a Śrī Kṛṣṇa, a Jesus, we can see how sinners become saints by one touch, one word, one look of a great soul; it awakens that divine dimension in such people. 'Go and sin no more,' Jesus said, and the sinner becomes a saint. This possibility is because we are *essentially sinless.* If we are really sinners, nobody can change us! A thing cannot change its character. *Svabhāvam na jahāti sā,* 'an object which has a particular character cannot give up that character'. But if it is only an external appearance, behind which is the true character, then it can change. It realizes its own true nature. Fire cannot give up its heat. Water cannot give up its wetness. That is their nature, *prakṛti,* as we call it. So, Śaṅkarācārya quotes this *svabhāvam na jahāti sā*. No object can give up its true nature. Temporarily it can give up, as it were. A piece of iron is cold to touch. You put it on fire, it glows; when taken out, it becomes again that original cold stuff.

Vedanta proclaims a great truth for all humanity. That is why the world today is eager to know it and live by it. This is just like the truths of the physical sciences; they proclaim a universal message, and the whole world is after physical science: we have not to thrust it on people. Truths are always universal. Opinions and dogmas are limited in scope. Here a profound Truth is uttered: *śṛṇvantu visve amṛtasya putrāḥ*, 'Hear me, O children of immortality!' Every child is a child of immortality. Convey these blessed ideas to your children when they are young, says Vivekananda. Like that Queen Madālasā whose story appears in our spiritual literature. When a child was born she used to place it in the cradle and sing to it this truth in a song: *nityo'si, śuddho'si, nirañjano'si samsāra māyāmala varjito'si,* 'Child, why are you weeping? You are that pure one, you are that ever free one, free from all the taints of *samsāra'.* That is how Madālasā educated her children and this is highly commended by Swamiji also (*Complete Works,* vol. 3, p. 243). You respect the child as a person; some profound dimension is in it, and the most profound dimension is this Truth, *amṛtasya putrāḥ.* That is education *and* religion, for religion so understood is continued education: experience rising from the sensory level to the super-sensory level.

That is the basis of this particular *Gītā* verse which you heard, *śloka 42: Indriyāṇi parāṇyāhuḥ indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ; Manasastu parā buddhiḥ yo buddheḥ paratastu saḥ.* Just above and behind the *buddhi* is the Atman, your own infinite Self. Śaṅkarācārya calls the *buddhi,* therefore, as *nediṣṭham brahma,* 'nearest to Brahman or Atman'. Only look behind, it is there. But that looking behind takes ages of struggle; it is not easy; that is why all this teaching is given. But one single truth that comes out of this teaching is: whatever part of your physical system might have become corrupted, there is one dimension which is ever free from all such corruption. That is your own true Self. Otherwise, sinners would have no hope. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan said in one lecture: 'every sinner has a future as every saint had a past'. That Truth about the human being has been expounded in the clearest and most rational language only in one literature, the Upaniṣads. It is found nowhere else in the world. It is, therefore, called in the Upaniṣads *aupaniṣadam puruṣam.* A disciple goes to a teacher in the Upaniṣads and asks: *aupaniṣadam puruṣam pṛcchāmi,* 'tell me about that

Puruṣa which is taught only in the Upaniṣads'. *Upaniṣatsu eva vijñāyate, na anyatra,* Śaṅkara comments upon it: 'taught only in the Upaniṣads, not elsewhere'.

When our people went to Benares on pilgrimage in those days, they often placed their ten thousand rupees into the hands of a friend in the village before going away. After about one and a half years, the person was likely to return; if I die during the pilgrimage, give the money to so-and-so, he would have said to the friend while departing. After a long time the pilgrim returns and the friend gives him back the ten thousand rupees; there was no cheating. The friend knew that money was an object and that he was not the servant of money. That is the one great lesson we have now almost forgotten. We are the servants of a few rupees. People can do any evil just for getting some money—not poor people, even well-to-do people. So, when we speak of the problem of poverty and beggary in India, I always say that there are two types of beggars in India. One is the beggar in the street, the other is the beggarly person living in high mansions. All that has come about because this truth was completely overlooked. Vedanta will teach human beings this profound truth for which India produced this *Vedānta keśari,* Lion of Vedanta, namely Swami Vivekananda. Earlier, it was Śaṅkarācārya, earlier still it was Buddha. Still earlier it was Śrī Kṛṣṇa: the Lion of Vedanta. That roaring of the lion of Vedanta we need today. And Swamiji did it in the modern period. That is what Swamiji said *(Complete Works,* vol. 4, p. 351): 'Let the lion of Vedanta roar; the foxes will fly to their holes.' And so, this *Vedāntakeśari* is a wonderful instrument for taking us out of this crime, delinquency, and other evil forces afflicting society, and restoring the human being to his or her own worth and dignity.

In this verse, the word *parā,* as I said earlier, has a deep meaning. While dealing with the three dimensions of the human personality, namely, *indriyāṇi, manas, buddhi,* I referred to the word *parā* used in the verse: *Indriyāṇi parāṇyāhuḥ,* '*sense organs* are superior to the sensory objects, etc. I shall now discuss it in the light of what Śaṅkarācārya has said in his commentary on similar verses in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (1. iii. 10).

Śaṅkarācārya says that whatever is subtle compared to the gross is *parā.* The gross is ordinary; the subtle is higher, superior, to the gross. The sense

objects are gross, you can touch them, you can handle them, but the sense organs are not gross; they are comparatively more subtle and we have always understood that energy in gross form is inferior to energy in subtle form. So, *parā* has this meaning of being subtle, *sūkṣmā*.

Then the second attribute comes in; *mahāntaśca,* more in range and power. Energy is there in quantity; but, the subtle has more energy. The word *mahāntaśca* means big, expansive. So, *sūkṣmā* and *mahāntaśca.*

And then comes the third and the last. *Pratyagātma-bhūtāśca,* 'nearer to one's own inner Self'. This body is external to you, and the nervous system and sensory system are internal to you, nearer to your own Self; the mind is still nearer to the Self. *Buddhi* is nearest to the Self. These are all scientific terms developed by Vedanta: *Sūkṣmā mahāntaśca pratyagātmabhūtāśca.* When you use the word *pratyagātmā,* it means the Atman, the inner Self. The external world is also Atman, but in its outer expression—*parāk svarūpa;* when the word *parāk* is used, you point your finger out to point to an objective reality. But, whenever you turn the finger towards yourself, that is to indicate the *pratyak* dimension of reality, the observer, the subject, the Self. That yonder is *parāk,* and this within is *pratyak.*

Nature has these two dimensions: *parāk* dimension, and *pratyak* dimension. The *parāk* dimension we study in the physical sciences, because that dimension is the object, in Sanskrit the *viṣaya,* revealed by the five senses. All sense data form the basis of all physical sciences. But, when you finish that study, the finger begins to turn inwards, towards yourself, man's consciousness, man as the observer, as the *viṣayi* in Sanskrit, as the subject, as the knower, as the Self; a more profound mystery is lurking there. Till now modern physical science did not understand nor care for this truth. But now, in this twentieth century, with all the revolutionary advances made, especially in nuclear physics, the observer, the subject, is slowly appearing on the horizon of modern science. That consciousness has a part to play in understanding quantum phenomena—a scientist will put it that way. Therefore, a new dimension of awareness, a new dimension of reality, is opening up before physical science. Vedanta anticipated this four thousand years ago and said that after the *parāk tattva* is studied, we have to study also the *pratyak tattva. Tattva* means truth or reality. *Parāk tattva* is truth,

i.e., nature, outside; *pratyak tattva* is truth, nature, within all. That is a large field of study by itself. And today, the study of consciousness is an important study in western psychology. Till now it was not there. Now that subject is becoming more and more important from various points of view. When you study physics and biology from the *theoretical point of view,* you come across this truth of something profound in the human being; from the *practical point of view* you come across the human situation; very distorted has become the human psyche because of the high technological developments. Physical science can't ignore this problem for long. If you want peace, if you want a fulfilled life, study your own mind and consciousness. It is in that *pratyak tattva* you will get the answer and the remedy. Not by adding more gadgets, more of consumer goods, are you going to get it. This kind of a compelling reason from both theoretical and practical considerations reveals the importance of this subject.

So, mark the importance of these two words, *parāk* and *pratyak*. Don't study only one dimension. Our Indian sages studied first the *parāk* dimension, the world outside, and developed many departments of physical sciences. Then only they studied the *pratyak* dimension. And, therefore, they got a unifying vision of reality, of the total reality, that Advaitic vision of one and non-dual Reality which appears as nature outside and as human consciousness within. This is what has made Vedanta to heartily accept modern Western science which had to fight with European religion and theology every inch of the way. This Advaitic vision came only because India investigated both the *parāk* aspect and the *pratyak* aspect. So, Vedanta calls the Atman *pratyagātmā, pratyak svarūpa, pratyak tattva.* All these words occur in Vedantic literature: what is the truth that is pulsing within you? Look at the eyes of a newborn baby. Some depth dimension is revealed through those eyes. What is that dimension? Take a doll baby. Look at its eyes. There is no depth at all; only the surface. In any living baby, its eyes will reveal a profound depth. It is this investigation that revealed to the sages these three coverings *indriya, manas,* and *buddhi* of that real *pratyak tattva* that is within you as the Atman.

In 1981, there was a special public meeting in Chicago to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Chicago Vivekananda Vedanta Society; there this subject was discussed by two of us: Dr. S. Chandrasekhar, the famous astro-

physicist of the Chicago University, on *Approach to Truth in Science,* and myself who spoke on *Approach to Truth in Vedanta.* Both are search for truth. So, the word *pratyak* and *parāk* are significant words. Modern physical science has studied only the *parāk* aspect of nature. Now the *pratyak* aspect is slowly looming on the horizon of physical sciences. So, *parāṇyāhuḥ* signifies more *sūkṣma,* more *mahāntaḥ,* more *pratyagātmabhūtaḥ.* These are the three words: subtle, immense in range and power, and more near your own true Self, inner Self in the context of what the word *parā* means. *Pratyagātmā* means inner Self.

We have so far discussed the first category among the three, namely, the sensory system. When we go to the *manas,* we find that it is much more *sūkṣmā,* 'subtle', than the sensory system, *mahāntaśca,* 'more immense in range and power', and, *pratyagātma-bhūtāśca,* 'more inward as the inner Self of man'.

The *manas* is not palpable, you can't touch it, you can't handle it. The nervous system, you can handle. The sensory system, you can handle: eyes, ears, everything. But the *manas* cannot be handled. And yet the mind is there. It contains much more energy than the sensory system. If the *manas* is weak, the sensory system goes down. In this way, they found *manas* is 'subtler', *sūkṣmā,* 'more immense in range and power', *mahāntaśca,* and *pratyagātma-bhūtāśca,* 'being more near to one's inner Self'.

Then you come to *buddhi,* the third item in the human system. *Buddhi* is far more subtle, far more immense in range and power, far more truly your own self than either the sensory system or the psychic system, *sūkṣmā mahāntaśca pratyagātmbhūtāśca.* These three we can study; and the one truth that comes out of it, as I said earlier, is that the more inward you go, the more energy resources you find in yourself.

Buddhi is considered to be 'the nearest to the Atman', *nediṣṭham brahma.* Brahman, also called Atman, is your Self. When the *buddhi* develops the purity to be able to look back, it realizes the infinite Atman or Brahman, and the person who experiences this becomes a Buddha, the enlightened one. Śaṅkarācārya says that this *sūkṣmatva, mahāntatva, pratyagātmabhūtatva* achieve their infinite value in the ever-free Self, the Atman. Every human psychophysical system possesses a small quantum of

explicit energy, and an infinite quantum of implicit energy. What is explicit is found in the body, muscle, nerve, mind, *buddhi;* what is implicit is lying behind in the Atman. So, every one of us is handling only a small packet of energy, though behind it there is an infinite packet of energy and we do not know it.

Vedanta wants to tell every human being that there is such a fund of energy of the Atman within you. Earlier, I said that this Atman is always free. No sin or crime can tarnish It; no evil can touch It. That is our true nature. That is the supreme truth conveyed by Vedanta to all humanity. That announcement in the Chicago Parliament of Religions by Vivekananda from the *Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad,* I have referred to earlier. Anyone can protest that he or she does not know it; but not knowing doesn't abolish a truth. Centuries ago, people did not know that the earth is round. Later science only *discovered* this truth, not created it. Similarly, here is that profound truth of the Atman discovered by the great sages on behalf of the whole of humanity. The *Gītā* said in the previous verse that sin and crime can infect the sensory system, the psychic system and the *buddhi.* It can never infect the Atman. One focus in everyone is absolutely ever pure, ever free. Therefore, I said then, that *our redemption is built into ourselves.* We have only to discover this truth. None can destroy that truth. Śaṅkarācārya says in his *Gītā* commentary that not even God can destroy the real Self of human beings. That is the language. So, these three ideas, *sūkṣmā, mahāntaśca, pratyagātmabhūtāśca,* reach their infinite dimension in the Atman. What a beautiful conception!

When the human being becomes aware of this truth, this *buddhi,* this *manas,* this sensory system become invested with a new purity, a new quality of love and compassion. What a welcome change comes to human life and inter-human relations when this truth is realized even a little; Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said this in the second chapter of the *Gītā*, *svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt.*

The Atman as pure Consciousness cannot be divided. The *Gītā* will tell us in the chapter 13, *śloka* 16: *avibhaktam ca bhūteṣu vibhaktam iva ca sthitam,* 'this Atman exists undivided in all beings which appear to be divided'; also as *avibhaktam vibhakteṣu,* (chapter 18, *śloka* 20) 'undivided

in these apparently divided things'. That is the most profound discovery based on which the *Gītā* is giving us a profound philosophy of life and action. The *Gītā*brings out the practical implications of that truth in human life and destiny, including the overcoming of criminal tendency in human beings and how to reduce crime in society. In a very corrupt society nobody will be happy. In a healthy society, all will be happy. It is man's privilege to work for a crime-free society, a society of equals, with a sense of belongingness and co-operation. It is for this purpose that great spiritual teachers come again and again: to take humanity to this path of mutuality, interdependence, co-operation, and away from conflict, violence, and crime.

In the *Mahābhārata*, which you see in the Delhi's television broadcast every week, you will find the King Drupada of the Pāñcālas became proud and arrogant when his classmate, Droṇa, went to him for help. Droṇa was very poor. They were classmates and the King had promised Droṇa, 'any time you want any help I am ready to give you'. But as soon as Drupada ascended the throne, the man changed! Power has come. Mind has become arrogant and proud. And he insulted Droṇa. The whole later tragedy of the *Mahābhārata* and the Kurukṣetra war began from there.

There is a very meaningful story told in a fascinating language in the *Śānti Parva* of the *Mahābhārata.* There was a sage doing *tapas* in the forest. One dog had somehow come into the āśrama, and the sage took care of it. Whatever little food the dog got, it ate and remained a good dog. After some time, the dog felt, 'I am frightened by a little ordinary tiger that comes near the āśrama. I want to be stronger than that tiger.' So, it appealed to the sage, 'I am your faithful servant here. Can you make me unafraid of that tiger?' 'Okay,' he said. He took some Ganges water, sprinkled it on the dog. The dog became powerful. Then the tiger began to run away; no more coming to the āśrama, because the dog had become strong. After some time another big animal, a lion, was coming and troubling the dog. Again it told its master. The master also said, 'okay, I will make you strong'. And it became stronger; no lion dared to come near. In this way, three or four types of animals, more fierce than the previous one, all of them became afraid of this dog through the blessing of this sage. Now that situation is interesting —increase in power. Then what happened? The dog became very powerful. So many animals used to come to the āśrama; but, now no animal comes,

because they are afraid of this dog. One day, the sage was in meditation, and this dog felt, 'I am now all powerful. Only one person is more powerful than me. It is this sage. Let me get rid of him, and then I will be supreme!' Thinking so, it rushed towards that sage to kill him. The sage opened his eyes, took a little water, sprinkled it on the dog; immediately it became that old dog once again; all its power vanished. When a person misbehaves with power in his or her hands, the only power to make that power constructive is discrimination; that comes to the *buddhi* only by alignment with the Atman.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling all humanity, *yo buddheḥ paratastu saḥ,* 'He who is beyond *buddhi* is the Atman', *where this subtlety, immensity, inwardness reach their infinite dimension.* That is humanity's nature. *Tat tvam asi,* 'you are That', as the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* proclaims. The more people realize this truth, better shall human society be. There is no dogma, there is no creed. It is a science of human being in depth, discovered by sages, rediscovered by other sages, and placed before all for our own rediscovery. It is not a dogma to be swallowed, nor a theory to be believed. In this way, *Bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving to humanity this philosophy of the human being in depth by which we shall enjoy a life of fulfilment, make others also live a life of fulfilment. That is the goal of human evolution. International peace, international welfare, these are all possible, because these values are present in every human being; only, he or she must carry human evolution beyond the organic level to higher ethical, moral, and spiritual levels.

And so this word *parā* is very important. Usually we translate it as 'higher'. But what does this 'higher' mean? Higher can mean spatially higher. Put a thing upstairs, it becomes higher. That is not the sense. So, in one sentence you can give the whole of this subject, and that is—*human energy resources are organized on an ascending scale of subtlety, immensity, and inwardness.*

That is a beautiful sentence coming from the hands of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. That ascending scale rises to its fullest when we come to *yo buddheḥ paratastu saḥ;* 'that infinite Self, the Atman, beyond and superior to *buddhi*'. Crime is a serious problem in our society today;

also in all international societies. How can you lead a peaceful and happy life when there is crime and violence around you? How can you sleep soundly when you know that a robber may come and rob you or even kill you any day? It is good that people know this science more and more. This land of India, known for its peace and harmony, about which three hundred years ago foreign ambassadors had spoken of as people not locking their homes, has become a land of crime and violence. It is because we were engaged in understanding only the *parāk* nature of the world. The *pratyak* nature we ignored in recent centuries. Now the time has come to turn a little attention to the *pratyak* dimension and discover the *tattvam* that is there. *Parāk* and *pratyak,* both are *tattvam,* truth. There is only one infinite truth appearing as external or internal. That is the language of Vedanta.

That is expounded in a great verse in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Kārikā* of Gauḍapāda. It is a wonderful verse (2. 38).

Tattvamadhyātmikam dṛṣṭvā tattvam dṛṣṭvā tu bāhyataḥ;
Tattvībhūtaḥ tadārāmaḥ tattvādapracyuto bhavet —

'Having realized the *tattvam* that is residing within your own self', *tattvam adhyātmikam dṛṣṭvā,* and 'realizing the *tattvam* residing in external nature', *tattvam dṛṣṭvā tu bāhyataḥ; tattvībhūtaḥ,* 'becoming one with truth', *tadārāmaḥ,* 'taking delight in that truth', *tattvād apracyuto bhavet,* 'you never fall down from the truth'.

You become absolutely insured against all evil once for all. Mark the word *tattvam* coming in that verse—*tasya bhāvaḥ tattvam,* 'the truth of a thing is *tattvam*', says Śaṅkarācārya. There is such a thing as a search for *tattvam.* That may be in the external world; it also can be in the internal world. Ultimately *tattvam* is one. External or internal have no meaning so far as *tattvam* is concerned. Just like saying that the earth is surrounded by only one ocean. But for convenience sake, we call it the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean. But the ocean is one, and not many. And so, external *tattvam,* internal *tattvam*—these are purely for the purpose of study and research. *Tattvam* itself is one, infinite, non-dual. Its realization is the goal of human evolution, says Vedanta. Are you going towards *tattvam?* What a beautiful idea! Vedanta has proclaimed this as the goal of human life. Jesus said, 'Thou shalt know the truth, and the Truth shall make you

free'. Our Indian nation was dedicated to Truth, by our national Constitution-makers forty years ago. That is why they took the motto from the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad: Satyameva jayate,* 'Truth alone triumphs'. Today, unfortunately, it has mostly disappeared from our nation; only untruth triumphs. Out of this hell we have to convert India into a land where more and more people seek Truth and a truthful life, not a false life. Only then can we 'dance freely, spontaneously', as given in a parable of Sri Ramakrishna:

And Śrī Kṛṣṇa concludes this third chapter and this topic of crime and its prevention with this exhortation:

एवं बुद्धेः परं बुद्ध्वा संस्तभ्यात्मानमात्मना।
जहि शत्रुं महाबाहो कामरूपं दुरासदम्॥४३॥

Evam buddheḥ param buddhvā samstabhyātmānamātmanā;
Jahi śatrum mahābāho kāmarūpam durāsadam — 3. 43

'Thus, knowing that Reality which is superior to the *buddhi*, and restraining the self by the Self, destroy, O mighty-armed, that unseizable enemy in the form of *kāma* or unrestrained sensual desire.'

You will find military language here. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was a warrior, and Arjuna was also a warrior. *Evam,* 'thus', *buddheḥ param buddhvā,* 'realizing that Truth which is beyond *buddhi*', *samstabhyātmānamātmanā,* 'disciplining the little self by the infinite Self', *jahi śatrum,* 'conquer the enemy'. Which is that enemy?, *kāmarūpam durāsadam* 'in the form of *kāma* which is difficult to capture' and which is the source of the tendency to crime and other evils. They are difficult to conquer, you have to marshal all your energies for that purpose. Don't take it easy, don't take it lying down. Nobody can become moral by simply sauntering into morality. It needs hard struggle. That struggle gives you energy and strength. So, this last sentence is the message to all people, especially to our people in India, today. Like a General in battle pointing out to his soldiers the citadel of the enemy and issuing orders: 'go and conquer it,' Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling all people, through Arjuna, to attack and conquer the source of all crime and delinquency. Then alone you are free. Unlike the battle of Kurukṣetra which

ended after 18 days, this is a continuous battle for all humanity to carry human evolution to its highest goal, namely, spiritual freedom and fulfilment. That inner war will remove also the tendency to wage external wars in the world.

The title of a book which I once read in America is *Success Through a Positive Mental Attitude,* published in 1894. Positive Mental Attitude is also called P.M.A. as against the negative mental attitude, N.M.A. When one has that confidence, that faith, more energy comes to him or her to build up a character with peace within and love and service without.

In the whole of world's literature, the *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads are the only two great books where you find this subject constantly emphasized, namely, faith in oneself—*ātma-śraddhā.* Strength and fearlessness. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, in his lecture given in Madras in 1897 on *Vedanta in Its Application to Indian Life* (*Complete Works,* vol. 3, p. 238):

'And the Upaniṣads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world; the whole world can be vivified, made strong, energised through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds, and all sects to stand on their feet and be free. Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upaniṣads.'

It is fearlessness inspiring fearlessness in others; this will come in the twelfth chapter of the *Gītā.*

इति कर्मयोगो नाम तृतीयोऽध्यायः —

Iti karma-yogo nāma tṛtīyo'dhyāyaḥ—

Thus ends the third chapter designated *The Yoga of Action.*

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 4

Karma-Sannyasa-Yoga
Yoga of Renunciation of Action

We concluded the study of the third chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā.* The last seven verses dealt with the very important topic of crime in society and how to overcome it. Now we begin the fourth chapter. The main philosophy that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is expounding has been already presented in the second and third chapters. Now he is only adding new ideas, new streams of spiritual life, in the remaining chapters, to make it richer and richer. This becomes relevant when we study the first few verses of the fourth chapter. The chapter begins:

श्रीभगवान् उवाच ।

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'Śrī Kṛṣṇa said.'

इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम्।
विवस्वान्मनवे प्राह मनुरिक्ष्वाकवेऽब्रवीत्॥१॥

Imam vivasvate yogam proktavān ahamavyayam;
Vivasvān manave prāha manurikṣvākave'bravīt— 4. 1

'I told this imperishable *yoga* to Vivasvān; Vivasvān told it to Manu; (and) Manu told it to Ikṣvāku:'

Imam yogam, 'this *yoga';* that means the philosophy he has expounded in the second and third chapters; *vivasvate proktavān aham avyayam,* 'this imperishable *yoga* I imparted to Vivasvān'. *Vivasvān manave prāha,* 'Vivasvān taught it to Manu'; *Manurikṣvākave abravīt,* 'Manu taught it to Ikṣvāku'. Ikṣvāku can be treated as a historical person; in his family succession Śrī Rāma came in a later age. *Vivasvān* means 'the sun'. Manu and Vivasvān belong to our ancient mythology. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says I

taught it to these people in the past ages. And the next *śloka* speaks of how it was passed on from teacher to student in a spiritual succession.

एवं परम्पराप्राप्तमिमं राजर्षयो विदुः।
स कालेनेह महता योगो नष्टः परन्तप॥२॥

Evam paramparāprāptamimam rājarṣayo viduḥ;
Sa kāleneha mahatā yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa — 4. 2

'Thus handed down in regular succession, the royal sages knew this *yoga;* this *yoga*, by long lapse of time, declined in this world, O scorcher of foes.'

This philosophy, what is called by the simple word *yoga,* and is treated as Practical Vedanta, was thus communicated by a succession of teachers and students. *Evam,* 'thus'; *paramparā* means succession, *prāptam,* 'attained by', a *guru-siṣya paramparā,* 'teacher-student succession'; *rājarṣayo viduḥ,* 'the *rājarṣis* knew it'. *Rajānaśca te ṛṣayaśca iti rājarṣiḥ,* says Śaṅkarācārya; 'those who are *rājās* and *ṛṣis* in one, are called *rājarṣis*', a very important word for us and for all else. When we study the *Gītā* and deal with the importance of this philosophy for our country today, and for other countries as well, in the fields of administration, politics, and management, in all these various fields in which we are trying to work out the destiny of human beings, their happiness and welfare, we need a philosophy to guide us. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa presents this kind of philosophy to all persons who are in possession of power and responsibility. He calls them *rājās* because they handle power; he calls them *ṛṣis* because they follow this philosophy of *yoga* and possess spiritual motivation. So, he calls them royal sages.

All our energy comes from the sun. We have, in India, idealized the concept of the sun. In fact, *The National Geographic Magazine* of U.S.A (Sept. 1948) in its article on 'The Smithsonian Institution' by Thomas R. Henry, says:

'The sun is the great Mother. All life on earth may be considered as transient materialization of the *exhaustless* floods of radiance which she pours on the planet's surface. This enables green plants to synthesize sugars

and starches from water in the soil and from carbon-di-oxide gas in the atmosphere, thus making possible all other essential foods. We eat sunshine in sugar, bread, and meat, burn sunshine of millions of years ago in coal and oil, wear sunshine in wool and cotton; sunshine makes the winds and the rain, the summers and winters of years and of ages.

'Particularly interwoven are the threads of life and light.'

Ancient India had understood the significance of the sun for human life and destiny. It became an object of adoration in the *Ìg-Veda,* of which the most important *mantra* is the famous *Gāyatrī:*

'Om tat savitur vareṇyam,
bhargo devasya dhīmahi,
dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt.'

'Om. We meditate on the glory of that divine Savita; may He endow us with (pure) intelligence.'

The physical sun is an external part of the spiritual reality behind the sun. That is the principle of life and light. Now, this is the mythical side of this teaching. But, when you come down, you come to the human level. *Vivasvān manave prāha,* 'Vivasvān taught it to Manu'. Manu is considered to be the first human being, from whom all humanity has come. So, human beings are called *mānavas,* the word *mānava* coming from the word Manu.

Manu taught it to Ikṣvāku. Ikṣvāku is the one who founded the *Sūrya vamśa,* 'solar dynasty' lineage of beings, in which Śrī Rāma came later. So, here are three people who were men of tremendous responsibility; they wanted a philosophy to guide them, and 'I taught it to them', Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here.

Then 'this philosophy has been coming down', *paramparā prāptam imam rājarṣayo viduḥ;* 'a succession of *rājarṣis* knew this philosophy'. *Kālena mahatā,* 'but after a long lapse of time', *sa yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa,* 'this *yoga* was lost in society, O Arjuna'. When we studied Śaṅkarācārya's Introduction to his commentary on the *Gītā*, we had occasion to refer to Śaṅkarācārya's statement that *Dharma* declines when men and women become too much avaricious, too much lustful, sensory-oriented; then higher faculties disappear from society; what you see in India today is the

same: higher values are disappearing. We are in that condition. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, after long ages, this dilution took place: *Dharma* became reduced, and naturally *adharma* increased. That caused a crisis in human history. *Yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa,* '*yoga* was lost, O Arjuna'. Śaṅkarācārya comments on that statement in his commentary on this verse to explain how the *yoga* was lost. A beautiful expression: *durbalān ajitendriyān prāpya yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa,* 'when this *yoga* fell into the hands of 'weaklings', *durbalān,* physically weak, mentally weak, *ajitendriyān,* 'without any discipline of the sensory energies', *yoga* becoming diluted day by day was lost'.

Anyone can understand this statement when he or she studies our own history and the history of other countries like Babylonia and Rome. People sometimes understood life and religion in a heroic sense. They did wonderful work, creative work, built up a rich culture and civilization. Later on, a tiredness of mind came, physical weakness came; people began to dilute religion also, making it cheaper and cheaper. So far as India is concerned, in this declining process, what we inherited in the modern period as religion was of the cheapest type. Perform a few rituals, and that too through a priest for a payment, and nothing else; no high character energy, no creative impulse, no humanist concern, these higher things disappeared. How much diluted it had become! Then we have had various do's and don'ts from morning till evening. Whether we should drink water with the right hand or with the left hand was a big problem, and *paṇḍits* will assemble to discuss which is the correct one! Thus developed any number of discussions on these petty subjects, besides marrying away of girls at the early age of eight or ten; even today you will find all sorts of puerile discussions in the name of religion. All the broad aspects of religion were completely forgotten, and all concern for the weaker human beings dried up. Therefore, we can see what Śaṅkarācārya says: when people lost their physical strength, their mental vigour, and also their control over the sensory system—high character cannot come without a measure of control of the sensory system—when such a situation came, this *yoga* became diluted and lost. That is what he tells us here in the second verse: *Sa kāleneha mahatā yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa,* '*yoga* was lost, O Arjuna'. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues:

स एवायं मया तेऽद्य योगः प्रोक्तः पुरातनः।
भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति रहस्यं ह्येतदुत्तमम्॥३॥

Sa evāyam mayā te'dya yogaḥ proktaḥ purātanaḥ;
Bhakto'si me sakhā ceti rahasyam hyetad uttamam—4. 3

'I have this day told you that same supremely profound ancient *yoga* considering you as my devotee and my friend.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *Sa evāyam mayā te'dya yogaḥ proktaḥ purātanaḥ*, 'that same ancient *yoga* I am now communicating to you, ' Arjuna'. But, why? *Bhakto'si,* 'you are my devotee'; not only so, *sakhā ceti,* 'you are also my friend'. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna were of the same age. They were friends; *sakhā,* 'friend', that is the word Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself uses. In the eleventh chapter you will find (*ślokas* 41–42), when Arjuna saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *viśvarūpa* or Universal Form, Arjuna saw himself also in that Universal Form. Then he became frightened and asked pardon of Śrī Kṛṣṇa: 'So many times while eating, drinking, playing, making merry with you, I treated you as my friend. Excuse me for all this. Now, I understand what a tremendous dimension your personality has!' But, otherwise, they were great friends.

In fact, just before the *Mahābhārata* war, King Dhṛtarāṣṭra sent Sañjaya to the tents of the Pāṇḍavas in the Kurukṣetra battlefield to find out what was going on there: how Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna, Bhīma, Yudhiṣṭhira, and others were behaving there. Dhṛtarāṣṭra wanted this information. When Sañjaya entered Śrī Kṛṣṇa's tent, he saw Arjuna placing his leg on the lap of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and a free conversation was going on between them. Sañjaya, after some time, returned to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and said, 'When I saw that picture, that Arjuna had put his leg on the lap of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and that this great personality called Śrī Kṛṣṇa was fully behind the Pāṇḍavas, I concluded that this war is lost for you, you will never win this war.' That report, however, did not impress Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son, Duryodhana. 'We shall win, we shall win,' that feeling remained strong in him. But see the intimate relationship between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna! So, *bhakto'si me sakhā ceti rahasyam hyetad uttamam; rahasyam* may mean 'a secret', it may also mean 'something very profound'. Here it means 'something very profound'. There is no secret in religion, but there is something very profound about it.

This *uttamam rahasyam,* 'this best *rahasyam*', this profound Truth by which human beings can be lifted from creatureliness to freedom. What can be a greater message than that! So, 'I communicated it in the past to Vivasvān; I am now communicating it to you, O Arjuna.'

As I said earlier from Śaṅkarācārya's sloka-in-eng-last-line, *durbalān ajitendriyān prāpya yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa,* '*yoga* was lost when it fell into the hands of weaklings and people without that discipline of the psychophysical energy system', which is the basis of all character. Without a little discipline of this energy system, you can't have character. Animals do not have discipline of the sensory energy system. They *live* at the sensory level. The human being alone can rise above that sensory level by a measure of discipline of the sensory system. More of the discipline and a high character is developed, but even a little of it is needed if you want to be a decent citizen in a free society. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, 'I communicated this message to *rājarṣis*.'

It is good for us to understand what is the significance of this *rājarṣi* concept in the *Gītā*. You will find that word occurring in the *Mahābhārata* in several places. We in India were for a thousand years, till recently, an unfree nation; we never exercised political power, except whatever feudal power we had within our feudal social system. The main political power was not in our hands. But once independence was gained, power came to our hands. People who were 'nobody', are now 'somebody', holding tremendous power in their hands. That is a big change that has come in the past forty years. But, one subject we have failed to discuss in that context: it is easy to hold power, but it is difficult to handle it properly. So, how to handle power? This is a big subject in every free society. Western societies have discussed this subject; so many books have been written. One of the books by agnostic Bertrand Russell is on this subject of *Power*.

In his book on '*Power'*, Bertrand Russell says in Chapter 17, *Ethics of Power,* 1938 edition:

'Love of power, if it is to be beneficent, must be bound up with some end other than power.'

‘It is not enough that there should be a purpose other than power; it is necessary that the purpose should be one which, if achieved, will help to satisfy the desires of others. … This is the second condition that love of power must fulfil if it is to be beneficent; it must be linked to some purpose which is, broadly speaking, in harmony with the desires of the other people who will be affected if the purpose is realized.’

This orientation of power, mentioned by Russell, is what Vedanta calls the fruit of spiritual growth, the *ṛṣi* aspect of the *rājarṣi* concept of the *Gītā.*

Power in the hands of a politician, an administrator, an industrialist, an intellectual—everywhere there is the problem of power. Somebody has *more* power, somebody *less*. And, generally, an ordinary citizen has very little power except to cast his or her vote at the elections. But any ordinary clerk or constable, or any other political or administrative functionary, has more power compared to the ordinary citizen.

But we have not learnt to ask this question to ourselves: ‘What shall I do with this power? How to handle it? We are a democracy; our Constitution promises great things to our people. I am an instrument of that Constitution. How shall I therefore function with the power that is in my hands?’

Because we did not discuss this subject and educate ourselves on this question, we have, during these forty years, plenty of instances of the misuse of power to the detriment of the people. Everyday you come across instances of misuse of power, self-aggrandizement, corruption, and all sorts of other evils, coming from the not handling of power in a way which can bring strength to the people. In a democracy, the state is meant to give strength to the people, not to keep them weak. Imperialistic governments keep the people weak. Feudal governments keep the people weak. But democracy is meant to strengthen the people. We have not kept these ideals clearly before us all these forty years. There have been exceptional individuals who had some moral and human sensitiveness in them. They did it. But by and large we have ignored this very important subject and have paid a heavy price for it, namely, remain a low developing nation even after forty years of independence!

We studied in this campus in Hyderabad, three years ago, Bhīṣma's discourses on *Rāja-dharma,* the Politics of the State, or Ethics of the State, in the *Śānti Parva* of the *Mahābhārata.* That is a wonderful subject. In that connection, we discussed this subject of 'handling of power to bring good to the people'. This is a universal problem. Every country has some people who have extra power, and some people who have less power. How do the 'extra-power' people behave?, that problem obtains in every country, in every society. The answer that Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives in the *Gītā*, and generally in the *Mahābhārata*, and some of the teachings of the Chinese sages, have tremendous relevance to all people today, particularly for us in India. It is in that context that you must understand this concept of *rājarṣi* that Śrī Kṛṣṇa has introduced at the beginning of this chapter: *rājarṣayo viduḥ,* '*rājarṣis* knew it'.

Whenever you handle power, you are called a *rājā. Rājā* need not be a crowned-head. Anybody who handles power is a *rājā.* In a very limited sense only *rājā* means a crowned-head. But handling power is what makes one a *rājā.* He or she may be crowned, but, suppose he or she has no power, then what kind of a *rājā* is he or she? *Sa rājate, virājate,* he or she shines in the power, in the political power, that is in his or her hands. That is how the word *rājā* was used. So, that political power, intellectual power, all types of power, is power *over* others. That is the meaning of power. In any society, we need somebody to handle power. So, politics is essential in a society. The ancient Greek concept of a state is called a polity. A 'polis' means a city, and there you have a polity, a group of people living together. 'How do they live together? How do they negotiate with each other? How are they governed and how is their polity defended against foreign encroachments?', these are the questions the Greeks discussed very thoroughly in ancient times. Modern Western nations also have developed this concept of power from the Greek city-state to the modern nation-state. And today we are reaching out to the international community. Recently, we are finding that the United Nations is getting more and more power to handle human affairs all over the world. So, this is the development of the power concept. Where there is more than one person, the idea of power comes in, the idea of management comes in, administration comes in. Where there is only one person, there is no problem at all. When somebody lives on an island all

alone, there is no problem, there is no second person. He can do whatever he likes there. But whenever other people are there, negotiation between the different peoples becomes necessary. We have to regulate that kind of a relationship. That means power. So, law, regulation, acts, assemblies and parliaments, all these come into the picture.

So, having come to this situation that we are a vast democracy, tremendous power is there in the hands of the Village Pañcāyats, the Zilla-Pariṣads, Assemblies, and finally, the Union Parliament, and, above all, the vast and ever-increasing administrative machinery. So, the fact of power we can all recognize today. But the question, how shall this power be used, is the most important question.

Even a father or mother at home has power over their children. They can't misuse that power. There are cases where parental power has been misused. That is why the United Nations developed this concept of prevention, by state action, of cruelty to children. So, father has power, mother has power, a teacher has power, everybody has some power over somebody who is below him or her.

However, in political and administrative power, we have the most important aspect of power over many segments of people. It is there that we need a philosophy to guide the holders of power. If that philosophy doesn't inspire the holders of power, he or she runs amuck, becoming inebriated by power. You can easily see how a human being becomes *inebriated* by getting a little power in one's hands. Today, the person is very simple and nice; tomorrow he or she is elevated to a position of power. His or her whole aspect changes: 'Don't you know who I am now?', power comes out in that burst! That shows that that person has not been able to *digest* that power. When you don't digest power, it inebriates you. Just like taking a little extra wine inebriates the mind. Power is called something that inebriates the human mind. That power can be political power, intellectual power, money power, or feudal pedigree power.

In the *Mahābhārata,* there is an important verse dealing with this subject (V. 34, 42):

Vidyāmado dhana madaḥ tṛitīyo'bhijanomadaḥ;

Ete mada avaliptānām eta eva satām damāḥ —

In a few words what a beautiful message comes out of this verse. The first *mada* or inebriation is from *vidyā,* knowledge. 'I have knowledge, I am an intellectual, don't you know?' That is called *vidyā-mada.* The second is *dhana-mada.* Till now I was poor; suddenly I came across lot of money. And that makes for *mada.* And the third is *abhijano-mada,* inebriation from family pedigree. The second line says, *Madā ete,* 'these are *madas,* inebriations', *avaliptānām,* 'only for the *avaliptas,* unrefined people, uncultured people'. But, *ta eva satām damāḥ,* 'to the great-minded people these very *madas* become *damas*'. In Sanskrit alone you can find the beauty and significance of that word *mada* becoming *dama.* The word *mada* is reversed. If *mada* means inebriation, *dama* means perfect self-control. Perfect self-discipline is called *dama.* He or she has digested all power; there is nothing to inebriate.

You have seen in our *Rāmāyaṇa* epic, how Rāma had digested power, how Bharata had digested power. *Ta eva satām damāḥ,* 'all *mada* becomes *dama* in all truly great people'. When one takes more wine, the person becomes inebriated; then he or she won't feel the gravitational pull of the earth. The person will be staggering all the time, and with some misbehaviour coming in between. So, many people in poetry and drama compare power to a drink, that which inebriates. In this *śloka* or verse you will find that special mention; but there are people who can digest even heavy drinks. Similarly here; some can digest all this power. It is a spiritual digestion. That comes from this *yoga.* The *yoga*-power helps one to digest all this power, and all *madas* become *damas* for that person.

Sri Ramakrishna said one day about an old brāhmaṇa who used to come to him and talk with him freely. One day he came and accosted Śri Ramakrishna in a very sarcastic and supercilious way: 'Hello! O Priest! How are you?'. Hearing this, Sri Ramakrishna told his companion, 'He seems to have come across some money. That is why I find this change in him today!' There is also a very important parable of Sri Ramakrishna on this subject:

'One day, a frog, jumping about in the garden, came across a rupee, a *shining* rupee. The frog took that rupee, looked at it, felt it very fine, took it

to its hole, and kept it there; but from that day it became a different frog. "I have *one rupee* with me! I am that much rich." So, another day, an elephant passed by the hole of that frog; and this frog came out angrily; "What business has this elephant to pass by *my* hole?" Saying so, it went and gave a few kicks to that elephant, went back, and gazed at the rupee in its hole. The elephant never knew that that frog existed in the world at all; but, the frog was satisfied: "I have expressed my sense of power and dominance."'

This is undigested power. And in world's literature, there is quite a bit of reference to this kind of indigestion of power. I use the word 'digestion', because you can understand it. If you eat food, if you digest it, it becomes strength to you. If you don't digest it, it becomes a toxin. It becomes a poison. Similarly, all experiences are to be digested. And there is only one energy that can digest them; that is the spiritual energy within you. The fire of spirituality can digest all kinds of power. Later in this chapter, we shall be coming across the expression, *jñānatapaḥ,* 'fire of knowledge'. That is the meaning of *yoga* here.

This subject comes in English literature in a famous passage in Shakespeare's drama, *Measure for Measure* (Act II, Sc. ii)*:*

'But man, proud man,

Drest in a little brief authority,

Most ignorant of what he's most assured,

His own glassy essence, like an angry ape,

Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven

As make the angels weep; …'

What is this man? He could have done wonderful things; but he is behaving like a monkey. Angels weep seeing the man's condition. Why? He has been dressed in a little *brief* authority. Not for too long. Long ago, one of my friends, a deputy commissioner, said to me in Mysore: 'Swamiji, as soon as the order of my transfer comes to the office, when I go there, nobody stands up. Till then they all used to stand up. Now they have stopped standing up.' That is called 'brief' power. So limited it is. Shakespeare understood this great subject: 'man dressed in a little brief

authority, most ignorant of what he is most assured, his own glassy essence,' his own Atman, the infinite Self. If he had known It, he could have digested the power. He doesn't know It, so he 'plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven, as make the angels weep'.

How much injustice is going on in our society today by the misuse of power by those who wield power. I give one example; we can multiply it million-fold. In Delhi, a citizen asked a telephone officer to replace his bad telephone; he demanded a large bribe; he could not afford it. The citizen approached none other than the Prime Minister, and he received his phone. A few days later, that very officer took away his phone! How helpless the citizen is! These smaller level bribes are the most distressing to the citizens at large.

We come across hundreds and hundreds of instances of injustice. A democratic state becomes weakened day by day by the increase of injustice in society. There may be poverty, there may be ignorance, that won't weaken it. But if there is injustice, and it increases, that will weaken the fabric of a democratic society. This injustice comes because those who hold power misuse it. There is no spiritual strength in the person to digest that power and to make it useful to the people. To help the democratic processes so as to strengthen our infant democratic state, and solve the problems of the millions, we need a philosophy. That philosophy is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving here. Have power. We do need power, but we must know how to handle it for the good of the state and the people; that digestive power will come to the holders of power from a deeper source in them, namely, the spiritual nature of the human being. When you manifest that power, everything becomes simple. No injustice, no oppression, no exploitation: only the spirit of humanism, the spirit of service, will inspire you throughout your career. If we can educate at least 10 or 15 per cent of our administration in this philosophy, even then there will be a tremendous change in the human situation. But it is not happening yet, though we have the remedy with us; because we have the remedy with us, we need not be afraid of the malady. Malady is bad; malady without remedy is worse. But if it is a case of 'malady with remedy available', we can always overcome the malady one day or the other. And my hope is that our people will understand this great philosophy of the *Gītā* and its concept of *rājarṣi,* and

become imbued with love for the nation and the people and the spirit of service.

During my Introduction to this book, I had referred to my talk with General J.N. Choudhary, Military Governor of Hyderabad in 1949, when he asked, 'Does this *Gītā* have any message for me as a Governor?' I had said: 'Yes, a tremendous message for you.' He thought it was only 'to give me a little peace of mind, I read a few verses from the *Gītā*.' 'No, that is absolutely wrong. This philosophy will teach you how to handle your power for the good of all,' I replied. *Kṣatriyāṇām balādhānāya,* Śaṅkarācārya comments in this section: 'in order to give strength to the holders of power, the *kṣatriya*'. Till now it was a caste, *kṣatriya* caste, only in India. But the quality of *kṣatriyahood* is a universal phenomenon. President Reagan of U.S.A. is a *kṣatriya*. So also Gorbachov of Soviet Union is a *kṣatriya*. Our Indian Prime Minister is a *kṣatriya*. So, all of them are *kṣatriyas,* because they are holders of power; no need to be crowned heads. Power they have; but they all need a new kind of strength by which they will digest that power, and use it for the good of all. So, Śaṅkarācārya calls it: *kṣatriyāṇām balādhānāya,* 'in order to give strength to the holders of power'. By this power they may be 'capable of serving humanity around them'. *Janān paripipālayitum*, to govern people in such a way as to make them feel big—that is called a democratic government. People must feel big by the touch of political and administrative power, and not become small. That latter is feudal. In a feudal society, feudal power touches man and woman to make him or her small. In a democratic society, political power touches people to make them big with self-respect and a sense of freedom. When they get this power of *yoga* philosophy, they become capable of working for the happiness and welfare of the people. What is *that* power that can digest all these political and administrative powers which are distracting the human situation and creating injustice and exploitation? That is called *yoga* power, inherent in every human being.

The great epic, *Mahābhārata,* speaks of three sources of power in every human being. I referred to it earlier also. First is *bāhu balam,* muscular energy. If you are weak physically, a strong person can push you to the wall; that is called muscular power. But that is a very ordinary power. The second power is *buddhi balam,* intellectual power. You can harm people and

also exploit people with your superior intellectual power. But with it you can also do good to the people. But doing good to the people comes to the intellect not from itself, but from another source. That third source is called *yoga balam* or *ātma balam.* So, *bāhu balam, buddhi balam, yoga balam* or *ātma balam.* Three *balams,* strengths, are there in you and me. And the *Gītā* says that those who are invested with political and other powers, must also develop a little bit of this *yoga balam.* Not much is necessary; even a little will make the person a source of fearlessness and blessing. They need not become big *ṛṣis,* but they must become people on the road to *ṛṣihood,* become a little spiritual, by which they will utilize the situation of power to serve the people and to make them better and happier. This is the importance of *ātma balam* or *yoga balam.*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has already told in the second chapter: *svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt,* 'even a little of this *Dharma*, this philosophy, can save one from great fear'. Imagine, therefore, a collector of a district with a little spiritual strength in him or her: how much good will come to the people around! So also a teacher in a village primary school: a little spiritual power will make him or her the servant of the children, looking after them, educating them, making them good citizens of the nation. All these higher motivations come only from this particular source: *ātma balam* or *yoga balam* inspiring the *buddhi balam. Buddhi* becomes chastened by the spiritual energy coming from the deeper level of the human personality. And this is a universal feature of humanity, according to Vedanta. *Yoga balam* is present in every human being. Only one must try to bring it out, unfold it, manifest it. So, when a teacher goes to a class, he or she must ask himself or herself: 'What am I here for? These are children coming from faraway places; they never had education for ages. Our country is now free; as a citizen of India, I am an instrument of our nation to give them education, to give them knowledge.' That very moment that teacher will become a big person, no more that tiny school master. He or she becomes an instrument of the nation for human purposes. Whenever he or she speaks, it will be only to educate the children, make them good citizens of the nation. So also a clerk in the Secretariat, or a constable on the roads, and every other state functionary. A bit of spiritual strength can make a big change in our society.

Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa stresses this point that all power must be a union of *rājā* and *ṛṣi* in one. Don't be only a *rāja,* don't be only a *ṛṣi,* combine *rāja* and *ṛṣi* in one. You have the power, chasten that power by a bit of spiritual strength. Chastened power is what we need. 'Taming of power' is what they call it today. We have to 'tame' power. Usually, in every Constitution, power is tamed by *external* means. What is that?, what you call 'balancing of power'. The President has one power, the Prime Minister has another power, and the judiciary has its own power; one will check the other, and in this way there is a constitutional balancing of power given by the Constitution. But we can always upset it, as we are seeing it every now and then; but when this spiritual power comes in to chasten the power of the power-holder, then the administration will flow smoothly; no kind of harmful confrontation will take place.

So, what we want is to see a happy society, peaceful and co-operative, and everybody trying to help everybody else. The spirit of service comes only from that higher level of *ātma balam*. Whenever you have power without that chastening of power, you use your power to exploit people and to aggrandize yourself by corrupt practices. A chastening is what we need. So, the word *rājarṣi* is used by the *Gītā*. Be a *rājā,* but also be a *ṛṣi.* How?, by a bit of spiritual strength coming to you, manifesting a bit of the spiritual energy which is your essential nature. This is what we need, says *Bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa here.

I have dealt with this subject of people-oriented Government, through the Rājarṣi concept, in more detail, in my book titled *Democratic Administration in the Light of Practical Vedanta*, published by the Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai-4. It contains six lectures delivered to the following audiences:

1) Staff of the Mysore (now Karnataka) State Secretariat in the *Vidhan Soudha* Conference Hall, Bangalore, under the auspices of the Indian Institute of Public Administration, Mysore Regional Branch, on 19th February, 1979, on *The Philosophy of Democratic Administration*. 2) Lecture at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, on 2nd August, 1979, on *Social Responsibilities of Public Administrators* 3) A Lecture at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, Maharashtra

Branch, Mantralaya, Bombay, on 6th February, 1979, on *The Science of Human Energy Resources*. 4) Lecture delivered at the Institute of Management in Government, Barton Hill, Tiruvanantapuram, Kerala, on 15th December, 1983, on *Human Values in Administration*. 5) Lecture delivered at the Delhi Municipal Corporation in its Town Hall, on 5th December, 1984, on *The Role of Local Self Government Institutions in our Democracy*. 6) Lecture delivered to the Andhra Pradesh Secretariat Employees, assembled in the open grounds of the Hyderabad Secretariat, on 24th March, 1986, on *Administrative Efficiency and Human Resource Development*.

It will contain, in the next edition, a similar seventh lecture, delivered at the special meeting of the Uttar Pradesh Government Secretariat Staff held at the Tilak Hall, Vidhan Bhavan, Lucknow Secretariat, on 2nd April, 1968, on *The Philosophy of Service*, now included in the third volume of *Eternal Values for a Changing Society*, published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay-7.

The whole teaching of the *Gītā* goes to the people all over the world with this message of *ātma vikāsa,* 'spiritual growth'; this is a type of greatness, before which all others also will feel great. What a beautiful idea! Before a mother's greatness, a child feels very elevated. Before a Gandhiji, everyone felt elevated. Our dignity is enhanced thereby. Before a Mussolini or a Hitler, all felt smaller and smaller. They gained greatness by destroying other people's greatness. To impart greatness to the people, to the most common people, you need the type of personality involved in the union of the *rājā* and the *ṛṣi*. Without the touch of the spiritual, that personality can never come. Wherever such personalities have come, their spiritual qualities have drawn people to them. They may not have gone to temples or churches or any gurudwaras; they may be atheists and agnostics. But they have grown spiritually. U.S. President Abraham Lincoln is especially an instance in American history before whom even the humblest person became elevated in dignity. That is real human greatness. In a feudal society, we had such greatness, occasionally only. Before a feudal lord, everybody else became slaves. In a feudal society, before parents, children become small. That is the old society. But the new society is going to be otherwise. Before the parents, children feel dignified. They get faith in themselves. What a

beautiful idea! This is the type of human growth that comes when a bit of this *Gītā* message of *yoga* enters into the mind and heart of the people. It is an intensely practical philosophy. It has nothing to do with theory, nothing to do with ritual or ceremony, much less with anything magical or mysterious. *It is a transformation, a human spiritual growth, unfolding one's infinite possibilities, step by step.*

Our Indian society till now stifled human development in recent centuries. Somebody wants to get up; some blow comes and lands on his or her head; wherefrom we do not know! That was our society. Now our society says to every one: 'Get up! I am here to help you. I shall make you stand on your own feet.' What a change! That is the change Swami Vivekananda wanted to bring about in India today through his message of practical Vedanta of which he considered the *Gītā* to be the best exposition. Every child must feel, every labourer must feel, that he or she has a place in society, must feel elevated, and know that free India is there to help him or her. What beautiful ideas these are! These are all Vedanta, intensely practical Vedanta. We didn't know anything about them till Swami Vivekananda came. Our priests and even *sādhus* will discuss Vedanta only theoretically, but live and act most un-Vedantically, and misguide society also accordingly. Vedanta teaches the innate divinity of every human being, while the Indian society trampled on the poor and the low of the same society. After Swami Vivekananda's arrival and exposition of the enormous possibilities of Vedanta to transform the human situation, the condition of the masses is changing for the better. That is what we are trying to achieve today in our society. Everyone feeling a sense of dignity, a sense of worth. 'Stand erect before me', that is the call of our democracy today to the common people, Hindu, Muslim, or Christian.

I have found it difficult to make our common people understand this. People have been told for centuries, 'you are nobody, you are nobody.' If I tell them that they are somebody, they don't understand at all. It is a new philosophy for them. When I was in the Ramakrishna Mission in Rangoon in 1939–42, I remember peons coming to deliver letters to me from the Government Secretariat or from other offices. The weather was hot, the man was perspiring. I am to sign the receipt; till then the peon will be standing there. So, I said, 'there is a chair, please sit down.' He said, 'no, I

won't sit down. I am not allowed to sit down.' 'No, I am telling you, please sit down.' He won't; he has been hypnotized. I argued, 'a chair is meant to be sat upon, not to be carried on the head; so sit down please.' Finally I will say, 'You are not *my* servant. You are the servant of somebody else. Therefore, you can sit down here; please sit.' So, I somehow made him sit for a minute. I was in Karachi from 1942 to 1948. One day, the postman delivered me a letter; he was perspiring heavily. It took time for me to sign the papers, and he was standing there. I said, 'Please sit down. There are sofas there.' He quietly sat on the floor. He won't sit on the sofa. 'Please sit on the sofa. It is meant for you all.' 'No.' Then I had to gently lift him and put him on the sofa! These common people have been told again and again, 'You are nobody. You are nobody.' They also believed they were nobody. You have to take the other side and say, 'You are somebody. You are somebody.' There should be none of these types of treatment of human beings which destroy their human dignity. These ideas were entirely foreign to our people two or three generations ago. They would say, these are all strange ideas, revolutionary ideas. But Vivekananda said that we need these revolutionary ideas.

Our society has become very stagnant, very antihuman. But, the modern age will witness a peaceful thorough social revolution with the inspiration of practical Vedanta and modern Western thought. The arrested development of our society, from north to south, from east to west, will give way to the full development of India's one-sixth of the world population. Inspiring ideas and movements for the unprecedented national development are already gently percolating in Indian society. Swami Vivekananda expounded in powerful language all these ideas in 1897 in his *Lectures from Colombo to Almora* and *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*. One sentence I wish to share with you. This comes in a letter of Swami Vivekananda from America to a disciple in India. He is dealing with the low dismal human situation in India during the last two centuries. Today things have changed a lot. But remember, he wrote it on 20 August 1893 to Alasinga Perumal of Madras (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 5, p. 16):

'They little dream of the ages of tyranny, mental, moral, and physical, that has reduced the image of God [that is man] to a mere beast of burden;

the emblem of the Divine Mother [which is woman], to a slave to bear children; and life itself, a curse.'

That was India's social consciousness about a hundred years ago. We are changing it. That is the direction of progress. Here the best of modern Western thought and the best of Vedanta, have joined together to lift men and women to the highest pinnacle of dignity and glory. And on his return to India in 1897 after four years of intense spiritual and cultural work in U.S.A. and England, he began his public lectures in India in Ramnad, near Rameswaram, before a large and enthusiastic audience with these prophetic words (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 3, pp. 145-146):

'The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking… India, this motherland of ours….from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.'

That is the importance for us in today's India, of this reference in the fourth chapter to the *rājarṣi* concept—*rājarṣayo viduḥ*, '*rājarṣis* knew this subject'. They will treat a human being as a human being, and increase human dignity with the power they handle. We need that transformation today in a big way. From primary schools to the highest educational institutions, from our Pañchāyats to the national Parliament, and in all administrative spheres, these ideas must inspire the concerned people. Then only will a thorough human transformation come in India. We are having industrial transformation, plenty of technology, improvement of export and import, but if the human mind in India does not get transformed by the freedom and national responsibility of democratic citizenship, it will be a national tragedy. A tragedy which was referred to two centuries ago by the British writer Oliver Goldsmith: 'Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey, where wealth accumulates, and men decay.' That will be the fate of our society if human development doesn't keep pace side by side with economic and technological development. It is that human development that Vedanta advocates through the teaching of the *Gītā*: the fullest human development, through man-making and nation-building education, as Vivekananda repeatedly said.

I would like to present one incident to contrast the way government staff treats citizens in India and in Britain. When I was the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture in Calcutta in the 1960s, we had a Dutch lady, but British Citizen, as the Manager of our International House. One day she came to me with a smiling face and said that from the British Government in London, she has received a communication saying that she was now eligible for old-age pension and, as the first instalment, a cheque had been enclosed. What wonderful human concern; she herself had not thought about it; but the faraway British Government had given her what was her due! When will such a situation, such a humanist concern invade our State and Union Government employees! The spread of this *Gītā*message is the only solution to this problem. It contains remedies for the maladies which our nation and several other nation are suffering from.

We have studied the first three verses of this chapter, and in the last verse there was a hint which made Arjuna confused. In the first verse and up to the third verse Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said: 'I taught it to Vivasvān, etc., etc.', and 'I am teaching it to you.' 'What kind of teaching is this? Śrī Kṛṣṇa, You are my contemporary, how could you teach them?' On this subject, therefore, Arjuna puts a question. A very important subject comes up there. This message of *yoga*, or practical Vedanta, has come in a succession of teachers and students; but through a long course of time, this message became diluted and lost. In the context of the first three verses, Śrī Kṛṣṇa had referred to the importance of this concept of *rājarṣi*; a man or a woman who handles political, social, economic and other powers, and yet uses them only for the good of the people. Such a person has combined power, on the one side, and inward spiritual growth on the other. The concept is *spiritual growth*, not just religion. We can have any amount of religion as usually understood—some ceremony, ritual, creed, dogma. That doesn't give us that capacity to handle power for the good of the people. But a little spiritual growth makes all the change, *adhyātmika vikāśa,* as we say in Sanskrit or Hindi, to mean 'spiritual expansion'. The concept of 'I' becomes expanded to include 'you', and to include 'all others'. That is spiritual growth out of which will come all value-oriented attitudes and actions—human concern, the spirit of service, the spirit of dedication.

Vedanta holds that all values are spiritual and their source is the divinity in every human being.

A big, but sad change has to come to our government staff at all levels. They should stop harassing the citizens for bribes when they come for a legitimate government sanction for starting a project or building a house. Their response to all such requests must be: 'What can I do to help you?' When such people multiply in a government, the state becomes well governed and the people fearless and happy. The great Indian epic, the *Mahābhārata,* conveys to us today, after about four thousand years, one criterion of social health and of a well-governed political state. In the *Rāja Dharma* or *Ethics of the State,* section of the *Śānti Parva,* Bhīṣma tells Yudhiṣṭhira (12. 68. 32, Bhandarkar Edition):

Striyaśca āpuruṣā mārgam sarvālamkāra bhūṣitāḥ;
Nirbhayāḥ pratipadyante yadā rakṣati bhūmipaḥ —

'If women having decorated themselves fully with ornaments, and without any men accompanying them, can move about freely and fearlessly through the streets and lanes (unmolested by anybody), that state is well-governed.'

And here the word *ṛṣi* is used to indicate this spiritual growth which Vedanta considers to be the birthright of every human being. Usually, when we hear the word *ṛṣi* or 'sage', we think of Visvāmitra, Vasiṣṭhā, or some other mythical sages. But why? Anybody can be a *ṛṣi* or sage by a little or more of that spiritual growth.

That possibility comes from the Vedantic teaching of the inherent divinity of every human being and his or her organic capacity to manifest it in life, action, and human relations. Swami Vivekananda expresses this truth of Vedanta in a brief utterance (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 1, p. 124):

'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal.'

In a letter to Sister Nivedita, Swamiji had written (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 7, p. 501):

‘Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character.’

That character is the fruit of spiritual growth, *adhyātmika vikāsa.* It is not dogmatic religion but this spiritual growth that results in a value-oriented life. That alone can resist easily all temptations, including all bribery, big or small. This is what I earlier referred to from the *Mahābhārata* as *ātma balam* over and above *bāhu balam* and *buddhi balam.* Those who have *buddhi balam,* intellectual strength, have no capacity to resist even small temptations; actually, they succumb to temptations more easily than others.

We are on the road of developing into an age when we start growing spiritually and live a value-oriented life. Our tiny ego, caught up in the meshes of our genetic system, can detach itself from this system and expand in love and concern. That is what is called spiritual growth. That is what is called *psychosocial evolution* in modern biology. Your psyche is able to detach from its genetic limitation and control and expand in sympathy, love and concern. Modern biology affirms that genes are selfish and cannot be the source of values. That expansion is an important development in education capable of achievement by every human being; and that is the goal of evolution at the human stage. The whole world is waiting to get the message of that evolutionary advance. Religions, we have plenty, but spiritual growth we have so little. Spiritual growth is what makes for character; or, wherever there is character, value-oriented activities, there is spiritual growth, says Vedanta. When you are on that road, even if you advance only a few steps, that is a great gain. So, in India we have to learn this one great lesson that, in the field of spiritual growth, it is not *all or nothing*; even a little is important. Unfortunately, our whole thinking is otherwise. ‘If I can’t become a sage Vasiṣṭha, I shall become a selfish worldly fellow.’ We have to learn that even a little is better than nothing. So, why not take the next step? Go one step further. Have love and concern; do work in a spirit of service. When you do that, you are already on the road of spiritual growth. It is such spiritually grown people, that must handle power, political power, administrative power, money power. When they do so, they do it for the good of all. Society becomes happy, human development takes place, there is peace and harmony. So, this concept of

rājarṣi is very important for us and for other nations; it will make our democracy healthy and strong. Śrī Kṛṣṇa considers his philosophy of *yoga* as practical Vedanta, as a teaching to produce *rājarṣis;* that is indicated by the opening words of the fourth chapter: *imam vivasvate yogam proktavān* and *rājarṣayo viduḥ.*

And in this context, I wish to refer to the ancient Chinese thinkers who had also developed this idea. The *rājarṣi* concept appears in Chinese thought as *sagely within and kingly without*. Outwardly you are a king, inwardly you are a sage. That is a wonderful expression—exact translation of the word *rājarṣi.* So, this is the transformation that the whole world, both undeveloped and developed nations, needs. That such growth is possible is guaranteed by the Vedantic truth of the innate divinity of every human being. If there is corruption, if there are social malpractices, if there is more and more crime, it all comes from an absence of that spiritual growth. 'Even a little of that spiritual growth will suffice', *svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt,* the second chapter had assured us. There is no other remedy; no legislation, no Act of Parliament, can make a person grow spiritually. It comes from handling the energies hidden within oneself by one's own effort. This kind of growth in the spiritual dimension, beyond the genetic dimension, makes a person big inwardly to be able to embrace others in love and service. The word *mahātmā* in Sanskrit means that. Great soul, *mahā ātmā;* why was Gandhiji called a *mahātmā?*, because his soul was not a prisoner of his tiny organic system. It had detached itself from it, and expanded in love and human concern. So, we called him a *mahātmā.*

The opposite of *mahātmā* is *alpātmā,* small soul; in this there are several levels as in the *mahātmā* concept. It is relevant to know what is the lowest level of *alpātmā.* In our national and state level politics and administration, there are these two types at various levels. We can consider the lowest of the *alpātmā* as the well-paid government officer who gets his wife burnt after taking an 'insufficient' dowry from her parents, and marrying another for a larger dowry! In all such cases, we can mark that the *small* soul of the person is entirely under the control of his genetic system. The genes are selfish, says modern biology. In his book, *The Selfish Gene,* the British biologist, Richard Dawkins, says (pp. 2–3):

‘The argument of this book is that we, and all other animals, are machines created by our genes. … I shall argue that a prominent quality to be expected in a successful gene is ruthless selfishness. This gene selfishness will usually give rise to selfishness in individual behaviour. …

‘My own feeling is that a human society based simply on gene’s law of universal ruthless selfishness would be a very nasty society in which to live. … Be warned that, if you wish, as I do, to build a society in which individuals cooperate generously and unselfishly towards good, you can get little help from “biological nature”. Little help means no help!’

Let education put every child on this road to being a *mahātmā;* little by little so that by the time the child reaches the age of retirement, he or she would have achieved a good deal of spiritual development. That is real scientific education, making for spiritual growth, development, fulfilment, and carrying the world also with oneself by that inner growth. It is that concept that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is referring to in the first few verses, and the teaching of *yoga* in the second and third chapters of the *Gītā* is meant for putting all humanity on the road of its spiritual growth; that is the march to evolutionary fulfilment; if such an onward movement does not occur, biologists like Sir Julian Huxley affirm that human evolution will stagnate at the sensory level and decay and die.

This kind of spiritual growth is the birthright of every human being, says Vedanta. This is the central theme of the *Gītā*. It is not an ascetic philosophy; it is not a world-rejecting philosophy; it is life in action, but life in action motivated by humanistic considerations of love and service. The statement of Śrī Kṛṣṇa raised a question from Arjuna; and we shall deal with that question now.

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca—

‘Arjuna said:’

अपरं भवतो जन्म परं जन्म विवस्वत:।
कथमेतद्विजानीयां त्वमादौ प्रोक्तवानिति॥४॥

Aparam bhavato janma param janma vivasvataḥ;
Kathametad vijānīyām tvamādau proktavān iti— 4. 4

'Later was your birth, and that of Vivasvat prior; how then should I understand that you spoke about this earlier?'

'Your birth is recent', *aparam bhavato janma.* Arjuna and Śri Kṛṣṇa were of the same age. Arjuna knew it; *param janma vivasvataḥ,* 'Vivasvān, (Manu and Ikṣvāku) were born long, long ago'. How can this 'poor Arjuna' understand that you taught it to them? This is a very relevant question. Any one of us would have put this question. *Katham etad vijānīyām tvam ādau proktavān iti*, 'that you taught it in very ancient times', *ādau,* 'in the very beginning of the process of creation' you taught it to such powerful persons, 'how can I understand this?'

To this question of Arjuna, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives the answer; and in this answer you have that wonderful teaching of the *Sanātana Dharma* about Divine Incarnation: *sambhavāmi yuge yuge,* 'I come again and again'; that is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa will tell in the eighth verse. This teaching is found only in the *Sanātana Dharma,* and also in Christianity, with the only difference that in Christianity the incarnation comes only once; no second time, except to wind up the whole show. But here it is, *yuge yuge sambhavāmi,* 'I come in every *yuga:* whenever there is a need'. That is the famous teaching about the *avatāra* in the *Gītā* and all the *Purāṇas*: the concept of Divine Incarnation.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said.'

बहूनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चार्जुन।
तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि न त्वं वेत्थ परन्तप॥५॥

Bahūni me vyatītāni janmāni tava cārjuna;
Tānyaham veda sarvāṇi na tvam vettha parantapa—4. 5

'Many are the births that have been passed through by me and by you, O Arjuna; I know them all, while you do not know, O scorcher of foes.'

Many are the births that you and I have undergone, *bahūni me vyatītāni,* ‘I have gone through many (births)’;, *tava ca,* ‘and of you also’; *tāni aham veda sarvāṇi,* ‘I know all of them’; *na tvam vettha parantapa,* ‘you do not know that, O scorcher of foes’; you are only a *jīva* or soul, you understand only the present birth, but I know that you and I have lived several times before. I know all of them. That is the first statement. How did Śrī Kṛṣṇa take birth again and again? And what was the purpose? That he says in the next two verses:

अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन्।
प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया॥६॥

Ajo’pi san avyayātmā bhūtānāmīśvaro’pi san;
Prakṛtim svāmadhiṣṭhāya sambhavāmyātmamāyayā—4. 6

‘Though I am unborn, of changeless nature, and Lord of all beings, yet subjugating my *prakṛti* or divine nature, I am born by my own *māyā.’*

Even though I am *aja,* ‘unborn or birthless’. From this negative Sanskrit word *aja* and positive word *janma* comes the positive English words like gene, genetic, etc. Even though I am *aja,* and *avyaya,* ‘birthless and imperishable’, and *bhūtānām īśvaro’pi san,* ‘even though I am the Lord of all creatures’, *sambhavāmi ātma māyayā*, ‘yet I assume a body by taking recourse to my own power of *māyā*’. I am the infinite divine, but using my power of *māyā,* I become a finite human individual; that is the nature of an incarnation. Outwardly very ordinary, inwardly possessed of some tremendous dimension, which ordinary people cannot easily see. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say that later on. *Prakṛtim svām adhiṣṭhāya sambhavāmi*, ‘taking recourse to my *prakṛti* or *māyā,* I am born.’ This *prakṛti* or nature itself is *māyā.* That power is there in the hands of the divine. How could the One become the many? It is through *māyā.* Though *māyā* plays a great part in all aspects of religion in India, whether it is *Bhakti* or *Jñāna,* in the *Gītā* (7. 14) you later on get a wonderful statement by Śrī Kṛṣṇa that ‘this *māyā* is difficult to overcome; those who take refuge in me alone, they alone will overcome this *māyā*’.

A magician does magic, and you are carried away by this magic. You think it is all true. Not at all. Look at the magician. Then you will understand the magic. If you are caught up in the magic, you become completely caught in an illusion. So, you go from *māyā* to the master of *māyā, māyāvi.* This is understood through a statement in the *Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad* (4. 10): *Māyām tu prakṛtim vidyāt, māyinam tu maheśvaram,* 'know *māya* to be this *prakṛti* or nature*,* and that supreme Divine is the master of this *māyā*'. The difference between God and all of us is: we are subject to *māyā,* but all *māyā* is subject to the Divine. He is free, we are not free. We are the same divine, but we are subject to this *māyā,* therefore we are finite, human individuals. But our true nature is that infinite One, as Vedanta will say again and again.

Sri Ramakrishna puts it in a simple Bengali saying: *Pañcabhūter phānde brahma paḍe kānde,* 'Brahman weeps when He is caught up in the net of the five elements.' The body and mind are made of five elements: earth, water, fire, air and space, the *pañcabhūtas.* In that net, Brahman is caught. Then Brahman behaves like a bird, an insect, a human being, etc., etc. Brahman weeps in you and in me. That is the language. So, Sri Ramakrishna also said: God *enchained* is man, man *unchained* is God. Whenever this *māyā* moves away, you and I know our true nature. But so long as *māyā* is there, we weep, forgetting our true nature.

So, this is the difference between all of us and the divine. He himself has become the universe; he entered into each one of these things. That is the language of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II. vi. 1)*: Tad anuprāviśat,* 'He entered into it'; *tad anupraviśya*, 'and having entered', he is functioning. He has forgotten his true form. This is a wonderful teaching: *Māyā* is what all of us are experiencing in our life.

As Vivekananda said in his famous 'Maya' lectures in England (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 2, p. 89):

'Māyā is not a theory but a simple statement of facts; what we are and what we see around us.'

So, this *māyā* is under the control of the Divine, who takes recourse to that *māyā* and uses it to become a tiny human child. And you have seen in

the *Mahābhārata* T.V. serial, how Śrī Kṛṣṇa was born as a tiny child in Kamsa's prison, but revealed to his parents his divine form. The words 'small' or 'big' have no meaning, so far as the infinite Divine is concerned: *aṇoraṇīyān mahato mahīyān,* 'smaller than an atom, bigger than the universe'; that is the Atman, says the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* in the second canto of the first chapter.

And so, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *prakṛtim svām adhiṣṭhāya sambhavāmi,* 'I take birth taking recourse to my *prakṛti*'. What is that?, *ātma māyayā*, 'by my own *māyā*', by my own power: 'Let me become an ordinary human being. Let me function there. Some great good has to be done for humanity. God alone can do this work.'

So, when God incarnates, a new energy appears in the world—a world-transforming energy. In fact, consider the word '*avatāra*', the Sanskrit word for 'Incarnation': how do we give this particular status of an '*avatāra*' to a human being? Ordinary individuals are subject to all the limitations of life, and an *avatāra* is also subject to bodily limitations. He has hunger, he has thirst, like others. But he is also infinite within. And he knows it, and that slowly manifests and works to uplift humanity. A tremendous energy flows out of him—a world-transforming and epoch-making energy. When you see such energy in any person, remember that the divine is manifested there. It is only in course of time that we realize that a divine manifestation was there. Time is a great factor. Ordinary greatness cannot stand the test of time. Today, you hear so many people are great, even a road is named after somebody. After two generations, nobody knows who he or she was. Nobody will know. That is called ordinary greatness.

As against it, there is another type of greatness, which goes on expanding more and more, century after century, after the death of the person, after the body has been burnt away. Such people we characterize as divine incarnations, who defeat the flow of time itself, or make time flow in the reverse direction. When he was alive, very few people knew him. After his death, many people come to know him. Many people begin to honour him, worship him. Even after two thousand years, people still continue to honour and worship him. What does that show?, an enormous power was manifested there. It is not ordinary human power. That greatness we have

seen in a few people. This is something unique. Therefore, India calls that person a divine Incarnation, an *avatāra.*

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is expounding this subject for the first time in our spiritual and cultural tradition. *Sambhavāmi ātmamāyayā,* 'by my own *māyā,* I am born', as a divine Incarnation. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's birth was extraordinary, all divine birth is extraordinary. The birth of Jesus was extraordinary. So also of Śrī Rāma. Every one of these is a 'world-moving force' as Vivekananda calls them. An ordinary saint cannot make the world move. A few people may benefit. But when an incarnation comes, he or she makes the world move. And he or she can produce many saints by one's own spiritual energy. In the name of *Bhagavān* Buddha, how many saints came! In the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, how many saints came! Through Jesus, how many saints have come! This is the special quality of an incarnation.

To all such people we give divine status. They are not ordinary human beings. We worship them. And a whole religion is centred in the worship of the divine incarnation. Most intense spirituality comes through the worship of a divine Incarnation. Find out for yourself. In your history you will find that, wherever there is that devotion to a divine Incarnation, high character, tremendous energy, all these qualities will flow from that kind of a devotion. We can say that almost the whole of Hindu religion is centred in Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Centred in Jesus, you have the same in the Western world.

So, He said, 'I body forth through control of my *māyā* power. Though infinite and imperishable, I become a finite human being.' And that story is very beautifully expressed in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* dealing with Śrī Kṛṣṇa's birth. If you read the tenth Book of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* in the first few chapters, you will find the story of the birth of a tiny child in the prison of king Kamsa. And there, Devakī and Vasudeva, father and mother, salute the newborn child! A divine Child with a glow around Him. 'We know that You are not an ordinary human child. We know that You are the divine Person. You have come into this world in this Form.' In that way, Devakī and Vasudeva are praising Śrī Kṛṣṇa and they are some of the most beautiful and highly philosophical hymns in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. And then the Incarnation's purpose must go on. If father and mother understand

that this child is a divine Incarnation, and not a human being, they will not be able to do service to him, and he won't be able to fulfil his own life's mission. So, the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* says, after the hymn of praise was over, Śrī Kṛṣṇa withdrew his *māyā,* withdrew his divine form, became an ordinary child, and started crying like any ordinary child. *Babhūvaḥ prākṛtaḥ śiśuḥ,* a *prākṛta śiśu,* 'became a *prākṛta śiśu,* a normal child'. And mother and father forgot his divine dimension. Then only could they *look after* the child. After that only, you come across the fascinating Kṛṣṇa Līlā, the Līlā or play of Śri Kṛṣṇa as a child, which has enthralled India for ages. And today it is enthralling many people in other countries also. And, later, as a grownup person, he performs a great *līlā*, namely, the teaching of this *Gītā* to Arjuna and through him to millions of people throughout the world. That is the charm and power of this Śrī Kṛṣṇa Incarnation.

Now, you find this kind of understanding of a divine Incarnation in modern writers on Sri Ramakrishna. I like one sentence from the French thinker, M. Romain Rolland, in his *Life of Ramakrishna*, where he presents Ramakrishna and Vivekananda as 'the splendid symphony of the universal soul'. In the section, *To My Western Readers,* p. 13, Romain Rolland says:

'The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people. Although he has been dead for forty years, his soul animates modern India. He was no hero of action like Gandhi, no genius in art or thought like Goethe or Tagore. He was a little village Brahmin of Bengal, whose outer life was set in a limited frame without striking incident, outside the political and social activities of his time. But, his inner life embraced the whole multiplicity of men and Gods.'

Earlier, in the Preface *To My Eastern Readers*, he had said (pp. 2-3):

'And it is because Ramakrishna more fully than any other man, not only conceived, but realized in himself the total Unity of this river of God, open to all rivers and all streams, that I have given him my love; and I have drawn a little of his sacred water to slake the great thirst of the world.'

This extraordinary dimension was revealed only to a very few persons in the beginning. Narendra, i.e., later Vivekananda, could understand; a few

others also could understand. Just like in Jesus, one or two could understand; not others: one of whom remarked: 'is he not the carpenter's son?'

So, the inner dimension of an incarnation and its immense range become understood only as centuries roll on. And today, without difficulty we can see the greatness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. But when he was alive, how many people could understand his greatness? Some accused him for stealing that garland called Syāmantaka, and he himself had to justify that he had not stolen it. Contemporary rulers like Śiśupāla also accused him. So, like any other human being, an incarnation also has to pass through the ups and downs of life. But that doesn't detract him from his tremendous divine energy resources within. Those energies begin to flow slowly and silently.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa imparted the *Gītā*to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. It may be over three thousand years ago. Only Arjuna was there, and Sañjaya was also observing it from the capital through sage Vyāsa's boon. But today, millions of people are listening to what Śrī Kṛṣṇa said on that Kurukṣetra battlefield. Similarly, Buddha spoke to five disciples at Sarnath in Varanasi in the sixth century B.C. Within five hundred years, what he uttered then spread throughout Asia, changing human life. Jesus spoke to eleven disciples. And that voice reached millions of people in the next thousand years. So, here you can see that one who is called a divine incarnation is not a mere ordinary individual. There is something extraordinary about him; but, ordinary people cannot understand him. Unless we have spiritual development in ourselves, we cannot understand the greatness of an incarnation. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say later on that 'many people do not know my true dimension. Those who are spiritually sensitive will be able to understand.' He tells Arjuna: 'I come on earth as an incarnation, *sambhavāmi,'* but when? The next verse answers it:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्॥७॥

Yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati bhārata;
Abhyutthānamadharmasya tadātmānam sṛjāmyaham—4. 7

‘Whenever, O descendant of Bharata, there is decline of *Dharma,* and rise of *Adharma,* then I body myself forth.’

That is the purpose of the Divine advent. No other power can do it. This is a famous verse quoted thousands of times by our spiritual seekers: *Yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati bhārata,* ‘whenever there is a *dharmaglāni,* a decline of *dharma*’, and *abhyutthānam adharmasya,* ‘increase of *adharma*’, *tadātmānam sṛjāmyaham,* ‘I body forth myself at that time.’ The purpose is:

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे॥८॥

Paritrāṇāya sādhūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām;
Dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge—4. 8

‘For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of *dharma,* I come into being in every age.’

In order to protect what is *dharma,* what is virtue, what is good and pure, in order to destroy what is evil and what is wicked, I come, not once, but in *yuga* after *yuga,* ‘age after age’. Whenever there is a need, I come for that purpose. The maintenance of the world in good condition is an important objective of the divine. We studied in the beginning Śrī Śaṅkarācārya’s introduction to his *Gītā* sloka-in-eng-last-line, where he refers to this situation that the social fabric is getting broken up because there is no ‘cement’ to unite one human being with another. Therefore, there is disruption in society; there is violence, there is crime, there is unfulfilment all through. That situation has to be retrieved; no scholars or politicians can do it; no bishops or priests can do it; no parliaments can do it. Only a divine power can do it. Moral and spiritual progress in a given human situation can come only from highly spiritual personalities, not through any other means. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, *sambhavāmi yuge yuge,* whenever such a situation comes, ‘I body forth myself age after age’. India having a 5000-year history, such situations have come up again and again. During short historical periods you may not see many incarnations. Over long historical periods, there are many such examples of a divine

manifestation and life becomes fresh once again, moral values come, humanistic values come, this continues for some time, again there is a decline, again there is a process of regeneration. What began with high moral values becomes low in course of time due to passing through human experience, needing a new inspiration. That is why, 'I come again and again', *sambhavāmi yuge yuge,* and the purpose is *paritrāṇāya sādhūnām,* 'for the protection of the good'.

In many of our government departments, we see today that good and honest staff suffer at the hands of powerful dishonest ones; in an office, if there are one or two honest officers, they are in trouble. All the others will try to pull them down, and bring even false cases against them. You can actually see this happening in our society, so that a straightforward honest person finds it difficult, because the ratio of forces is against him or her. So, the person finds it difficult, and after some struggle he or she may also say, 'I will be one with you.'

At the time of our political independence in 1947, what an elevating atmosphere we had! But after that, every year, there was this sliding down, and it continues even now. When you study Vivekananda literature, you find a new energy coming: Let us go upwards; no more going downwards! Let us develop love for the nation, for the millions of our weaker sections and energetically serve them. When that message reaches more and more of our people, that kind of change will come. Today, that tremendous power that manifested through Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and that divine personality, Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, will generate a widespread revival of the moral and humanistic awareness and energy. Vivekananda had said (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 5, p. 228):

'The national ideals of India are *renunciation* and *service*. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself. The banner of spirituality cannot be raised too high in this country. In it alone is salvation.'

It takes time for great ideas to spread in society. It took about three hundred years to make Buddha's message current coin in Indian society during Mauryan Emperor Ashoka's time. And Vivekananda says that the greatest period of Indian history was when Buddha's message inspired

Indian society and many nations in Asia also, with the spirit of compassion, purity, and the spirit of service, including service to animals with even hospitals for animals; all these started in many parts of India at that time. But after some five hundred years, slowly decline set in. By the seventh-eighth century A.D., the essential energy of that message had become diluted. *Huen Tsang*, the Chinese pilgrim who visited India in the seventh century A.D. and who has left an account of that seven-year Indian visit, saw that decline. It was at that time, *from the spiritual and philosophical points of view*, a Śaṅkarācārya came, a personality of immense power, purity and compassion, and did his marvellous work at the philosophical and mental levels of the people including establishing the cultural unity of India. It is Swami Vivekananda who conveyed the Vedantic harmony between the message of Buddha and Śaṅkarācārya to the common people, to lift up our whole nation. That is the work that is now set in motion through the divine manifestation of Sri Ramakrishna, the messenger of harmony, in our own time. Swami Vivekananda expressed this harmony of Sri Ramakrishna in a beautiful hymn in praise to Sri Ramakrishna, while he was installing Sri Ramakrishna's picture in a devotee's house in Howrah:

Sthāpakāya ca dharmasya sarvadharmasvarūpiṇe;
Avatāravariṣṭhāya rāmakṛṣṇāya te namaḥ —

'Salutations to you, Ramakrishna, who came to establish *Dharma', sthāpakāya ca dharmasya:* the same promise of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *Sarvadharmasvarūpiṇe,* not to establish any particular sect, or a particular creed bearing a special label or his name, but 'the embodiment of every religion', and *avatāravariṣṭhāya,* 'the supreme divine manifestation', *rāmakṛṣṇāya te namaḥ,* 'to you, Ramakrishna, we offer our salutations'. You will find, therefore, that this divine *avataraṇa* is happening again and again in the Indian context. In other countries, this happened only once—in Christianity—and even then people there didn't accept him; they crucified him. It is not enough that God comes into the world, but the people must be prepared to accept him. That is something unique in India. India has a philosophy and a culture, which can appreciate a divine manifestation and welcome him. We don't crucify our great teachers! Other nations kill even religious reformers; but that also never happens in India. We always try to understand an incarnation or a reformer, first a few people, then more and

more people; in this way the *avatāra* begins to function for the good of society, and in this modern age, not only in India and for India, but also in and for all countries abroad. That is the great work that is going on now, silently and quietly. This was initiated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa a few thousand years ago, may be three or four thousand. That is the wonderful teaching that we are now studying in the fourth chapter.

These verses, 7 and 8, deal with the concept of the divine Incarnation. I have referred to this concept of divine Incarnation in two articles in volume one of my 4-volume book on *Eternal Values for a Changing Society* published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay-7. These articles were entitled *Avatāra as History-maker*, and *Avatāra as Divinity*. These two values, of history-making and of divinity, together coalesce in certain types of great people. And they command the reverence of humanity. They set in motion a current of love and compassion, tolerance and understanding. They continue to command that reverence even after hundreds and hundreds of years. To such a category, a small number in world history, we could give no better name than *avatāra* or 'Divine Incarnation', and to them humanity offers divine honour and divine worship. Such people are not many in world history. Lesser personalities, influencing human life in various directions, have been in plenty. Sometimes a great author can inspire great sociopolitical movements, like Voltaire and Rousseau and Karl Marx. So also, other writers, artists, and great intellectuals in many countries. But this type of greatness, namely, a Divine Incarnation, is unique. That is what is being expressed here: that the divine spark in all of us, which shines only a little bit, in a twinkle, shines in brilliance in that divine personality. So, he is described as the divine embodiment, and he comes to lift us up to our own inherent divine stature. That is the significance of the *avatāra* in the Indian cultural context.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa accepts in the eighth verse that, in order to increase *dharma* or ethical and humanistic values in society, he comes again and again to the world as a human being and plays his part. In the earlier Incarnations, like Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Rāma, we see them actually destroying evil people, being born as *kṣatriyas,* like Śrī Kṛṣṇa destroying a Kamsa or a Śiśupāla and Śrī Rāma destroying Rāvaṇa. But in Buddha, we don't find any killing of evil people physically; only absolute love and compassion and the lifting of

people morally and spiritually. In Jesus also you find the same. A spiritual energy flows from them touching all sorts of people including the sinners. Today, in Sri Ramakrishna, you find that same power working, just to influence people gently, silently, even without their knowing it. That is the divine power manifesting through a human body in various ways. Śrī Kṛṣṇa referred to it once, and he will refer to this divine birth and action of an Incarnation in verse 9. If one knows it as it truly is, that there is a divine power playing in this person, not an ordinary human power, then he or she will achieve one's spiritual development. In our *bhakti* movement in India, *bhakti* centred in a divine Incarnation is the source of great power to stimulate human spiritual progress. That *bhakti* is something dynamic, because it has a divine personality as an example to inspire it. Therefore, most of our *bhakti* movements are centred in these divine Incarnations; *bhakti* can be centred also in the divine personality of myth and legend, like Śiva, Viṣṇu, Devī, which also will help to develop human spiritual life. But it is most intense when that divine manifests as a human incarnation. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यमेवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः।
त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन॥९॥

Janma karma ca me divyamevam yo vetti tattvataḥ;
Tyaktvā deham punarjanma naiti māmeti so'rjuna—4. 9

'One who thus knows, in true light, my divine birth and action, after leaving the body, is not born again; and he or she attains to me, O Arjuna.'

My *janma* and *karma*, 'my birth and actions', are *divyam,* 'divine'; they are not of the ordinary type. We have got our own *janma* and *karma.* We are *jīvas*, ordinary human souls. We are hungry for so many things, we are after this or that. That is our *janma* and *karma.* The case of an Incarnation is different. They have nothing to run after. They are full. But from the beginning, they are there to give, to give out of the plenty within. That is their *janma* and *karma.* From very young days they know that they have come for a great work. *Janma karma ca me divyam. Evam yo vetti tattvatah,* 'those who understand'—*vetti* means understand; *tattvataḥ* means in reality, the exact truth: 'this is something divine, I recognize it'. When

you do so, you must have attained some spiritual development. Otherwise, you cannot appreciate a divine personality. So, *tyaktvā deham punarjanma naiti*, 'after leaving the body at death that person never takes rebirth'. He or she becomes perfect, centred in the love of the divine Personality, knowing him to be a divine Incarnation. He or she will no more have rebirth. *Saḥ mām eti Arjuna*, 'he or she comes unto me only, O Arjuna'. He achieves oneness with me. That is the highest spiritual development. A devotee seeks to be with God, living in his presence just like fish living in water always. Water is its life, it cannot live outside water. So, we live in God all the time. Such a person is a very great spiritual *sādhaka* or seeker. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling us that this capacity to understand the greatness of a divine Incarnation doesn't come to everyone.

Sri Ramakrishna says, even many sages, like Bharadwāja and others, at the time of Śrī Rāma's Incarnation, couldn't understand that he was a divine Incarnation. 'He is a great soul', that is how they evaluated him and respected him. A few others could immediately recognize the divine character of Śrī Rāma's personality. So, this you can see in the case of Jesus also who was treated as a carpenter's son by many. Some could not understand at all Śrī Kṛṣṇa's divine greatness. But those who could understand, they got tremendous spiritual nourishment through that understanding. The next *śloka* is number 10; it is very famous and full of divine meaning:

वीतरागभयक्रोधा मन्मया मामुपाश्रिता:।
बहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्भावमागता:॥१०॥

Vītarāgabhayakrodhā manmayā māmupāśritāḥ;
Bahavo jñānatapasā pūtā madbhāvamāgatāḥ — 4. 10

'Freed from attachment, fear, and anger, absorbed in me, taking refuge in me, purified by the fire of knowledge, many have attained to my being.'

Here is very simple Sanskrit, with profound meaning, compressed in a few words. The last line says: *bahavo madbhāvam āgatāḥ*, 'many have achieved oneness with me'. Earlier he had said, 'those who realize me truly as the divine Incarnation, they come unto me'. Now he repeats it: Many

have achieved this spiritual realization. It is not something new. All through the ages, 'many people have striven and achieved this spiritual realization.' *Bahavo madbhāvam āgatāḥ.* That is the main framework of the verse. Many have come unto me and become one with me. Not one, not two, but many. It is a tremendous tradition of spiritual growth, development, and realization. How did they achieve it? That is the statement in the rest of the verse. And that statement has a profound meaning in our everyday life all over the world.

Three things they overcame. What are they? *Rāga, bhaya, krodha. Vīta* means without. Without *rāga, bhaya, krodha; rāga* is sensory attachment; *bhaya* is fear; *krodha* is anger. Three emotions, unrestrained, which are against the moral and spiritual life of humanity. Mind you, Vedanta does not consider even fear as a friend of moral and spiritual life. Fear is an inhibitor of high action. To survive as a human being we need ordinary small fears. But beyond that, fear is a negative force, though many religions put stress on 'fear of God', trembling due to the fear of God; it has no moral value, according to Vedanta; fear makes you moral because of external pressure. Just like the policeman's baton makes you behave the right way on the road. You are not moral thereby. You are made moral by external force. So, fear has nothing to do with moral and spiritual life. Vedanta is insistent on it. Overcome fear. A true person does not need fear at all. So, that emotion is added to what we have to overcome. Attachment, fear and anger: three emotions which contain enormous energy. We are not to destroy that energy; we have to transform that energy. How to do so?

That is the significance of the next famous phrase: *jñānatapasā pūtā,* 'purified through the *tapas* of *jñāna*'. What a beautiful expression! *Jñāna,* spiritual knowledge, is given the characteristic of *tapas,* which literally means austerity: austerity of knowledge. What a beautiful idea! We often perform physical austerity, fasting and all that. That is very very ordinary. The greatest *tapas* is mental: mind doing *tapas,* purifying the personality through that *tapas.* That is called *jñānatapas* or knowledge-*tapas.* Suppose a child goes to school. He or she starts *jñānatapas;* he or she has to study a book, try to understand it, try to reproduce it in an essay. All this is *jñānatapas.* It is a hard job. You are training the mind thereby; so, that is one aspect of *jñānatapas.* The whole of secular education was treated in

India as a *jñānatapas.* Knowledge doesn't come straight for you. You cannot just swallow knowledge. You have to work hard for it. When *tapas* goes away from education, education becomes cheap, very cheap. And much of education all over the world today is treated as cheap by great thinkers. In our country it is the worst. Education has become so cheap. No need to think at all. The mind doesn't play any part. *Jñānatapas* has been taken away completely from education.

Thinkers in India, and in many other countries including the U.S.A., have expressed dissatisfaction with and criticized the current educational programmes. The *Gītā* will say that this criticism is due to the search for knowledge being separated from the concept of *tapas.* The human mind must be raised to the level of knowledge-seeking. And what is learned must be digested, must be assimilated. All that is *tapas.* A very hard job, as I told you. You hear a lecture from a teacher, then reproduce it in an essay. And then the teacher examines it and finds that you have done well. How much of mental *tapas* you had to go through to do this! That *tapas* is now almost gone.

Another aspect of *jñānatapas* is still more important. Emotions of anger, lustful tendencies, hatred, fear—all these have to be burnt in the fire of knowledge. That is the real *tapas;* that *tapas* is supreme; that is what makes for high character. And therefore, this *śloka* says: *Vīta rāga bhaya krodhā*, 'those who have overcome *rāga, bhaya* and *krodha,* attachment, fear and anger', *manmayā,* 'and have become filled with me', *mām upāśritāḥ,* 'have become devoted to me'. They have known that this Divine Reality is their own inner Self, he is the Self of all. Their mind is drawn to that great reality. *Bahavo,* 'many such', *jñānatapasā pūtā,* 'purified in this fire of knowledge', transforming the energies of the three emotions of attachment, anger and fear into constructive, creative forms to strengthen personality and character: that is *tapas.* Without *tapas*, none of these can happen.

I often mention that we take crude oil from the earth, refine it, and produce beautiful and useful petroleum products. So, this human mind and body have to become a refinery, a psychological refinery. Take all these emotions, and just refine them. Out of this refining process, what comes out? All ethical and humanistic values—love, compassion, fearlessness,

spirit of service. Vedanta proclaims that the source of all values is the infinite and ever-pure and ever-free Atman in the depth of the body-mind complex. *Vedanta also holds that the science of values is the link between physical sciences and the science of spirituality*. What a beautiful conception of *jñānatapas!* We have never thought about it in modern civilization. We are thinking of external things all the time. What is happening to people? They become egoistic, petty-minded, quarrelsome, and also violent and criminal. All this is happening to educated people. We never handled education from this new point of view; that was wrong. Handle your mind and refine its thoughts and emotions! Your mind, your emotions, these are the nearest to you. Handle them; purify them; refine them. What a high character energy will come out of this! And how happy human life will be! How peaceful inter-human relationships will become; how loving and peaceful husband-wife relationships will become! What a fulfilled life humanity will have! And modern biology considers *fulfilment* as the goal of human evolution.

So, the emphasis in *śloka* 10 on this concept of *jñānatapas* is highly relevant today. Have you done *jñānatapas? Jñāna* is knowledge, any knowledge, but in this context it means spiritual knowledge; have you treated it as a *tapas?* The greatest *tapas* is *jñānatapas.* Physical *tapas* is very ordinary: some endurance record, that is all. But this is something that makes for high character, and tremendous energy comes out of the individual concerned. We have to create that refinery in ourselves. Nobody else can do it for you and for me. If I want an oil refinery, I am sure any foreign country can advance lot of money for the refinery. But in this field, nobody is going to help you. You have to do it yourself, though you can get guidance from others. In the sixth chapter of the *Gītā* which we shall be studying later, verses five and six give us this message:

Uddharet ātmanātmānam nātmānam avasādayet;
ātmaiva hyātmano bandhuḥ ātmaiva ripurātmanaḥ —

'Raise yourself by yourself, do not weaken yourself; you are your own friend, you are your own enemy.'

Bandhurātmātmanaḥ tasya yena ātmaivātmanā jitaḥ;
Anātmanastu śatrutve vartetātmaiva śatruvat —

‘One is one’s own friend when he or she conquers oneself; if unsubdued by oneself, one operates as one’s own enemy.’

This is a beautiful idea which must be given to every child. By the time it is five or six, it must be made aware of how to make its body and mind a refinery; it must start to refine impressions coming from outside and responses going out of itself. If one gets something bad from outside, one must refine it, and send out what is only good. That is the nature of the human psychological system when it is aware of the Divine behind it. *Therefore, all can do this in varying measures*. So, this *śloka* has tremendous reference to human development, fulfilment, happy inter-human relationships, including international relationships. Any politician can create tremendous problems for interstate relationship, if he or she hasn’t got even a little of this refinement within. But, if they are well refined, they will be a source of national strength and tremendous international understanding and peace. Similarly, also in a family, between parents and children. So, we have to initiate this process, little by little, when people are young, from the age of five or six onwards. Then it becomes more intensive from ages twelve to fourteen, and by the time one is 25, one must feel, ‘yes, I have converted my body-mind complex into a laboratory for refining experience.’ What a beautiful idea of education! Along with it, get whatever knowledge you can get from books and teachers, through schools and colleges. But without this, that knowledge will not be fruitful . *Pūtā jñānatapasā; pūtā* ‘purified or refined’, *jñānatapasā,* ‘by the *tapas* of *jñāna*’; *madbhāvam āgatāḥ,* ‘they have become one with me’. *Bahavo,* ‘many’. If many have achieved this, why not I? So many people all over the world, through various spiritual practices, through various ethical and moral disciplines, have come to this wonderful state. Even atheists and agnostics can come to this state, because they may deny a God ‘there’, but they can’t deny their own inner Self. So, atheism, agnosticism, and all types of religious beliefs are all one in this particular process. We can overcome fear, anger, as well as unrestrained sensory attachment. Convert every experience into the pure form by this *jñānatapas,* or the refining capacity of the human mind. The great word *tapas* has been interpreted by Śaṅkarācārya, quoting from *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* as: *manasaśca indriyāṇām ca aikāgryam tapa ucyate*—‘the

concentration of the mind and the sense organs is called *tapas*'. I may not believe in a God, but I can become deeply spiritual, deeply ethical, deeply human. There are many people among the agnostics who have high character. We never speak ill of agnosticism and atheism from the Vedantic point of view. Ordinary religions may be afraid of these people, but not Vedanta. There is a significant verse in the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* which explains how Vedanta achieved this broad vision (verse 573):

Astīti pratyayo yaśca yaśca nāstīti vastuni;
Buddhereva vikāretau na tu nityasya vastunaḥ —

'The affirmation of the theist that ultimate Truth is, and the negation of the atheist that the ultimate Truth is not, are only modifications of the mind and do not affect the Eternal Truth (of the Atman).'

Vedanta welcomes everybody; you are a human being, you have a tremendous centre within you though you may not know it. But it is there. That is manifesting when you become moral, kind, and compassionate; you are manifesting the divine within you. Vivekananda's definition of religion given earlier becomes relevant in this context: 'Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man'. When my ego manifests, I repel people, but when the Atman manifests even a little, I attract people. That is the meaning of manifestation of the divine as the science of religion, as the science of human possibilities. Everyone who has manifested this divine within even a little becomes a beautiful person; he or she will have happy relationships with other people. So, this is the most important thing for human beings to remember and implement.

This *śloka* or verse occurs not only here in this *Gītā*, but also in that great book, *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Kārikā* of Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkarācārya's teacher's teacher, who lived on the banks of the Narmada river about seventh century AD. There it is slightly different, dealing with the transcendental experience of *samādhi,* beyond the world of relativity, beyond the world of name and form, the state when the mind rises and realizes the infinite, the Absolute. How does it happen? Describing that, that *śloka* says (II. 35):

Vītarāgabhayakrodhaiḥ munibhiḥ vedapāragaiḥ;

Nirvikalpo hyayam dṛṣṭaḥ prapañcopaśamo'dvayaḥ —

'The *munis* or sages, freed from attachment, fear, and anger, who have gone beyond the Vedas, have realized this non-dual *nirvikalpa* or 'no-mind' state, where this ever-changing universe of relativity ceases to be.'

From the Advaita level of experience, this *śloka* says the same thing as the *Gītā śloka* said about going beyond *rāga, bhaya, krodha.* Those who are *munis,* 'thoughtful people'; *mananaśīlo muniḥ,* thus Śaṅkara defines it. Ordinarily, by *muni* we mean a man of silence; *maunam* means silence; but, the real meaning is, not silence of speech, but that the mind is under great discipline, thinking is under discipline, and the person is thoughtful. That kind of a person is called a *muni;* whatever he or she says, behind that there is tremendous thinking, not mere blurting out. A *muni* cannot blurt out. There is weight in what he or she says. In most of the talk by men and women, there is no weight. Whereas when *munis* talk, there is weight in it; half a sentence is enough to carry tremendous meaning for you. That kind of '*speaking less and thinking more*' is called *muni.* Such *munis* overcome *rāga, bhaya* and *krodha.* Further, they have achieved one more thing: *veda pāragaiḥ*, 'they have gone beyond the Vedas'. *Nowhere in the world's religious literature, except in India's Sanātana Dharma, will you find an expression like this, of a devotee going beyond the Vedas or any other scripture*. Go beyond the Vedas, beyond the Koran, beyond the Bible, means: don't be satisfied with belief but experience the truth for yourself. Words do not give you the truth. Truth comes only through experience. So, such people, who begin to experiment in spiritual life and want to experience the highest, they go beyond the Vedas. They go beyond all these sacred books. What a beautiful revolutionary idea! Throughout India's history, we have *always* emphasized this point. That a mystic who experiences truth goes beyond all these holy books. Volumes are needed for you and me to learn some elements of spiritual life, but these people have *lived* it, *experienced* it. In one passage in the Vedas themselves—in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*—it is actually said that for one who knows Brahman, the ultimate Reality, the Veda has no meaning: *vedo avedo bhavati,* 'Veda becomes no-Veda'. Mark the firm language: *vedo avedo bhavati.* And Śaṅkarācārya also comments on it by saying in a passage that, 'like a servant who carries a lamp in front of you to find your way, and you

have found it, so becomes the Veda to that person'. What is the Veda?, utterances of those who have known the Truth. Here is one who has known the Truth; why should he or she depend upon the Veda further? Actual experience takes you beyond books. At a certain stage, books become a botheration. The Upaniṣad itself says that: *vāco viglāpanam hi tat,* 'words are only so much of distraction for such minds'.

So, in many passages of India's religious books, you will find this emphasis that the human being can take recourse to books in the beginning, but, later on, he or she has to discard them and try to realize the Truth that is mentioned there. So, the real stress of true religion is on experience, not reading, not scholarship, on 'being and becoming' as Vivekananda has put it. Sri Ramakrishna says in one of his parables: 'Great scholars, who do not practise moral and spiritual life, are like vultures flying high up in the sky, but their attention is fixed on the dead bodies on the earth below! High scholarship and small mind! What is the use of that? Develop a high mind. That is more important. So, *munibhiḥ vedapāragaiḥ,* 'thinking people who have gone beyond the Vedas'. You have already heard from the second chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa telling Arjuna, 'Vedas deal with the three *guṇas;* go beyond the three *guṇas,* O Arjuna', *Traiguṇya viṣayā vedā nistraiguṇyo bhavārjuna.* So, in this way, Gauḍapāda says, there have been many people who have overcome lust, fear and anger, become very thoughtful, and then had gone beyond the Vedas. *Bahavo,* 'many such', *jñānatapasā pūtā,* 'purified by the *tapas* of *jñāna*'; we saw this expression in the *Gītā*. But here in the *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā* it is, *vīta rāga bhaya krodhaiḥ munibhiḥ vedapāragaiḥ nirvikalpo hyayam dṛṣṭaḥ,* 'this *nirvikalpa* state has been realized'. *Vikalpa* means mental modification; *nirvikalpa,* no mental modification, absolute stillness. The ocean full of waves is one state, all the waves have subsided and the ocean is perfectly calm, that is another state. So, *nirvikalpo hi ayam*, 'this *nirvikalpa* state', it is spoken of with such definiteness, 'this *nirvikalpa* state has been realized' by such people. What is the nature of that state? *Prapañcopaśamo,* 'in which this world of duality, this world of change, the world of relativity, is completely dissolved'. Imagine what a beautiful statement this is! Why do I see duality? We get duality through the five senses. If I can look at reality as it is, it will be quite different. You will see everything as Brahman, everything as pure

consciousness. So, *nirvikalpo hyayam dṛṣṭaḥ prapañcopaśamo,* the whole *prapañca* or the manifested world becomes completely dissolved in that ultimate reality. Everything is Brahman.

When Albert Einstein was asked about the highest understanding of reality in physics, he said that there are two realities in physics today: one is matter, the other is the field. Both cannot be true, he said, for, the field alone is true. The field is that in which matter is a bubble. The whole universe is like a few bubbles, that is all. That infinite energy field, that is the physical truth. *That knowledge, which is purely intellectual knowledge, becomes an experiential knowledge through this kind of tapas, which Vedanta describes as nirvikalpo hi ayam dṛṣṭaḥ prapañcopaśamo.* Not only so, *advayaḥ,* 'non-dual'. There is no multiplicity in this ultimate Reality; there is no duality there. One infinite consciousness is there, in which all this universe appears with all its diversity; we see this diversity now with our senses, and when we realize this truth, diversity goes. Only one Atman in every being. That is the highest spiritual realization.

In the Upaniṣads this is highly commended. Here is a wonderful passage from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* dealing with creation as self projection of Brahman, the ultimate Reality (II. i. 20):

Sa yathā ūrṇanābhiḥ tantunā uccaret,
yathā agneḥ kṣudrā visphuliṅgā vyuccaranti;
Evam eva asmāt ātmanaḥ sarve prāṇāḥ
sarve lokāḥ, sarve devāḥ, sarvāṇi bhūtāni vyuccaranti;
Tasyopaniṣad—satyasya satyam iti;
prāṇā vai satyam, teṣām eṣa satyam —

'Just as a spider (produces out of itself and) moves about in its own web, just as from a fire minute sparks fly about, exactly so, verily, from this Atman have come forth all (physical, biophysical, and psychophysical) energies, all worlds, all gods, all beings.

'Its mystic name (Upaniṣad) is *Truth of truth.* The energies, verily, are truth; this Atman is the Truth of those energies.'

In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad,* which we studied here before we took up this *Gītā*, we read that in one of its verses it is said, *brahmaivedam amṛtam,* 'this whole universe is the immortal Brahman'. *Idam* is the technical term for *this manifested universe*. 'It is the immortal Brahman', *brahmaivedam amṛtam.* Then it is explained further in the same *śloka: purastāt brahma,* 'Brahman is in front'; *paścāt brahma,* 'Brahman is behind'; *dakṣiṇataścottareṇa,* 'on the right as well as the left'; *brahmaivedam viśvamidam variṣṭham,* 'the whole manifested universe is that worshipful Brahman'. That is the summit of spiritual realization, where all duality has been overcome, and you find absolute unity of pure consciousness.

So, *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā* says the same thing which *Gītā* is telling from another point of view, that this is something *which many have realized*, and many *can* realize, because we have the organic capacity. Only, we must turn in that direction. We have to learn how to discipline this psychophysical energy system and make it move in the direction of this supreme truth, and not be satisfied with sensory comfort and pleasure. Most people use this body-mind complex only for comfort and pleasure. Today that is maximum in our civilization. That is why we call it a consumerist civilization. We want only consumerist goods to pamper our physical system. And a very efficient technology pampers our sensory cravings. We are stuck up at the sensory level. But at some time human beings will begin to feel this as irksome as it doesn't express the best in us; there is something missing, let us try to understand that. At some time, every human being will begin to ask this question: what next?, what next? I have money, I have power, I have pleasure, but something is missing. That hunger for something higher, not exactly clear yet, is a tremendous experience. Out of that hunger comes this scientific and spiritual search for the Infinite and the Eternal. Several people in some of today's advanced nations are experiencing this hunger, a hunger which Śaṅkarācārya expressed in the last line of his famous hymn: *tataḥ kim, tataḥ kim, tataḥ kim*, *tataḥ kim?* You have health, you have wealth, you have power, you have pleasure, still the mind will ask, what next?, what next?, what next?, what next? We may stifle it in the beginning, but at some time it will become very insistent. Then you begin to think seriously. Something is missing, let me find out that something.

And so, this spiritual striving is a real fact. Many have gone through it; that spiritual road has been walked by several people: like a pilgrim road. You can also walk over it, in this life itself, not in a future life, says Vedanta. When you are young and vigorous, develop this refinery within yourself, so that your life will be really richer. That is why it is meant to be adopted gently by all young people. From the age of 16, it must be pursued with more seriousness along with other pursuits of *achievement*. Day-to-day work goes on, moneymaking goes on, human relations go on, but the mind is experiencing a new stir—a stir which, if pursued, will make the mind a better instrument for human relationships. This is what modern civilization has forgotten; this is what Vedanta holds all the time before humanity as the road for it to travel. Physical pleasure is not meant to be the ultimate aim for man. It is only the beginning; a baby can have physical pleasure. For, what else does the baby seek except comfort and pleasure. The safety and security of the mother's body and the milk the mother gives, that is what the baby wants and nothing else. That is the first stage. But after 2 to 2½ years, the baby wants knowledge. If mother gives milk again, 'No, I don't want, I want something better', mental food: knowledge, it wants. That is the line of creative, not stagnant, human evolution. It is when we proceed on that line of human evolution towards higher knowledge, that we will finally find that we are in the world of Brahman, the world of spiritual evolution. That is where knowledge matures into wisdom. That is what is to be done today, so that all this knowledge-seeking becomes meaningful. Today, it is meaningful only to fatten oneself more at the physical level. Your knowledge gives you more money, more pleasure, more comfort, that is all. Has it made you better as a person? Not at all, except in a few cases, more knowledge and more money become allied with more wickedness and more petty-mindedness. Therefore, our ancient teachers said: 'March on! Develop your spiritual strength. That is your evolutionary path and goal.' And, in the present age, Swami Vivekananda has given this *Upaniṣadic* clarion call: 'Arise, Awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.'

Nature has given us this cerebral system. It has a tremendous capacity to discriminate, to fix goals and to proceed in that direction. No animal has got it. Animals have only pleasure and comfort, reproduction, and effort for survival. Man alone has the capacity to seek knowledge: knowledge

physical, knowledge spiritual. Both are knowledge for us, and so let humanity take that road, not this road which we have already traversed as animals. This idea comes again and again in the *Mahābhārata* and in our other books. Swami Vivekananda asked this question in his lectures in England and America, 'which human being can enjoy a meal with more gusto than a pig?' A pig's life is entirely in the body. It can enjoy a meal much better than you and I. Our experience in the sensory realm becomes interfered by our capacity for knowledge, by our thinking, by our logical faculty. So, we cannot have that much sensory enjoyment as an animal has. An animal body is meant for more and more of physical comfort and pleasures. A human body also can have it, but that is not its goal; it has to transcend it. That is what our spiritual teachers have said. The search for higher things will be emphasized again and again in the case of human beings. That is the line of human evolution; otherwise, it will be absolute stagnation at the physical level. This human being, with an extraordinary instrument called the cerebral system, has become stagnant at the sensory level, at the level of *samsāra,* worldliness; what a tragedy! That is what Vedanta says. Such a person is called a *samsāri,* a man or a woman getting stagnant at the sensory level. Living in the world does not make one a *samsāri;* but getting stagnant at the sensory level makes one so; a whole civilization also can become stagnant as a *samsāri.*

So, we begin to think about it; then we find that nature has placed this cerebral system at the top level of the human body. Nature could have put it in the hip or somewhere else. In fact, today's neurology tells us that some huge mammals had a second relay brain in the hip, so that, as British neurologist Gray Walter humorously puts it, 'that mammal could argue a-priori and a-posteriori!' Later, that second one was abolished by nature and the brain at the crest was slowly developed and became the instrument of human evolution for one who knew how to use this remarkable instrument. According to physiology, all the ordinary functions of the body, so far as self-preservation is concerned, are done by the lower brain, which we share with the animals. Only this higher brain has got a different function: how to think and develop far-sight and foresight, how to take this life to higher levels? It has to achieve not only knowledge but also insight and inward

penetrating power. The word *insight*, in the psychological context is defined by Geraldine Coster of England (*Yoga and Western Psychology,* p. 92):

'It is defined as the capacity for being able to call up a greater variety and number of correlates to any given idea or stimulus, and enables the fortunate possessor to react with "originality" to given situations.'

However, if we make this cerebral system the servant of the sensory system, what a tragedy it will be! Just for survival, just for pleasure, this brain is not to be used only for that! Unfortunately, the more educated a person, the more he or she uses this brain for only that and not for lifting life to higher levels. From the Vedantic point of view this is a great tragedy of the educated in the modern age. Nature has intended this higher brain to be the instrument of man's emancipation. I am quoting a neurologist in this connection: Gray Walter, referred to above, from his book, *The Living Brain*. He said, evolution sees that various capacities have been developed in the animal body, like automatic temperature control, for the purpose of survival; when evolution rises to the level of the human body, many new capacities have also come. Now what do all these mean? The human body has inherited that temperature control in the body. That was achieved in the later mammals first, not the earlier mammals. Early mammals did not have this kind of thermostatic equilibrium in the body. But nature found that they could not survive; so, in order to help the species to survive, nature evolved this thermostatic equilibrium within the later mammals and in the human body which also belongs to the mammalian species.

Dealing with the evolutionary significance of this mechanism, British neurologist Gray Walter says (*The Livine Brain,* p. 16):

'The acquisition of internal temperature control, thermostasis, was a supreme event in neural, indeed, in all natural history. It made possible the survival of mammals on a cooling globe. That was its general importance in evolution. Its particular importance was that it completed in one section of the brain, an automatic system of stabilization for the vital functions of the organism—a condition known as homeostasis. *With this arrangement, other parts of the brain are left free for functions not immediately related to the vital engine or the senses, for functions surpassing the wonders of homeostasis itself.'* (italics not by the author).

And relating this physical homeostasis of organic evolution to the mental and spiritual homeostasis of *yoga,* Gray Walter concludes (p. 19):

'And once again, as new horizons open, we become aware of old landmarks. The experience of homeostasis, the perfect mechanical calm which it allows the brain, has been known for two or three thousand years under various appellations. It is the physiological aspect of all the perfectionist faiths— *nirvāṇa*, the abstraction of the *yogī*, the peace that passeth understanding, the derided "happiness that lies within"; *it is a state of grace in which disorder and disease are mechanical slips and errors*.' (italics not by the author).

He had said earlier that for all mammals, homeostasis meant only survival; but for man, emancipation.

So, in these *Gītā ślokas* you find humanity is asked to take this truth seriously. This brain is not meant to be a mere instrument for personal survival. It is meant to take us to the highest level of freedom, and take others also to that high level of freedom—for spiritual growth, development and fulfilment of oneself and others. This is the great lesson that even the subject like physiology will teach us; and yet, today's materialistic oriented physical science does not know this truth. To make the higher brain the servant of the lower brain is the worst thing that a human being can do. The lower brain is meant only for survival, not for any higher purpose. Śrī Kṛṣṇa had earlier referred to *buddhi-yoga: Buddhau śaraṇam anviccha,* 'take refuge in *buddhi*'. *Buddhi* represents the capacity of this higher brain, the luminous organ. The lower brain has no luminosity. It has only energy, and it knows the survival purpose, nothing more. But luminous, with the capacity to see far ahead and take you in that direction, only *buddhi* can do. Therefore, develop *buddhi, Gītā* had said. *Buddhi* alone can take one to the highest level; it is enlightened reason and will combined.

And Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to tell us later on (*Gītā*, 10. 10): 'When I want to bless anybody, I only help him or her to resort to this *buddhi*,' *dadāmi buddhi-yogam tam,* 'I give them *buddhi-yoga*', *yena mām upayānti te,* 'by which they will themselves find their way towards me'. That *buddhi-yoga* means detaching this higher brain from the control of the lower brain and making it function independently and freely by aligning with the Atman just

behind. That will help to take you to higher and higher levels. What is the use of giving me money?, what is the use of giving me something luxurious? Give me *buddhi-yoga.* I will get all these things by myself. I get all the energy thereby. To this urge in a human being, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that the best blessing that one can get is this *buddhi-yoga,* and the worst curse one can have is to lose one's *buddhi.* You heard about it in the second chapter, *buddhināśāt praṇaśyati,* 'when the *buddhi* is lost, one perishes'. A person who does a terrible crime had *buddhināśa* when he or she committed that crime. So also, *buddhināśa* is behind any other evil that we do. But, if the *buddhi* is alert, none of this will happen. So, take recourse to *buddhi.* Develop your *buddhi* is the message of the *Gītā* to all. That comes through, what I said earlier, developing the psychophysical system as a refinery of experience. When you refine experience, you take all that energy, transform it into high creative energy, and that becomes *buddhi*-energy. The same psychic energy can be either at the sensory level, or at the psychic level, or at the *buddhi* level. These levels are there for the same energy. Whatever functions through your eye, ear, etc., that is also psychic energy. But it functions at the sensory level. Very low level it is. When you go to the mental level it is higher. A little more subtle, and more pervasive. But when it comes to the *buddhi*-level, it becomes pure, and transparent and of wide range and scope.

I had referred to Mahatma Gandhi. What was special about him? He had converted his body-mind complex into a high class refinery. So, when so much hatred came to him—he was even beaten by the police in South Africa—he took all that into that refinery and quietly transformed it into love and compassion. He told, don't do anything to that policeman, he did it out of ignorance. Now, what is that attitude of Gandhiji due to? There is no miracle in it. He has tried it and succeeded; we don't try it even. When we try, we also can achieve it. Why not convert hatred into love in this refinery?, you ask that question to yourself. When you begin to think about it—suppose that man hates me, I begin to *think* about that hatred—even then that hatred becomes less. When you *think* of a subject, it becomes different. When you don't think about it, it rules over you. You are subject to it. Therefore, human refinery means that *jñānatapas,* converting the mind into a *tapas* of *jñāna.* These are all intensely practical propositions. Many

have done it, why not I? I can understand, some people don't know all this. But they can know today; these books like the *Gītā* are there. Having known, we have to put it into practise and say, 'Yes, this is meant to develop character. All the knowledge I gain is meant to put it into life, experience, and character.' That second step is important for all people. There is nothing impossible. Impossible things are happening today: landing on the moon, one of the space vehicles, the Voyager, is going beyond the solar system into outer space! If technology-physical can achieve this, cannot technology-mental achieve similar things in the sphere of life?

This discipline of the mind, making a refinery of it, where all experience gets refined, and the pure products come out of it—what a beautiful idea! Today, nothing can inspire children more than these ideas. Nobody has told them. If you tell them that your body-mind is a beautiful laboratory; you go to physics and chemistry laboratory to do so many things, continue to do that, but don't ever forget that your own body-mind is a big laboratory. You have to refine all the experiences coming there. Father scolded you one day, you become depressed, convert that depression into cheerfulness once again by putting it through that refinery process. Soon it will become a very simple matter. Children become stronger and stronger as days go by. This is the meaning and wide significance of this wonderful verse 10: *Vītarāgabhayakrodhā manmayā mām upāśritāḥ; Bahavo jñānatapasā pūtā madbhāvam āgatāḥ*. Remember that word *bahavo* meaning many. It is not a new thing. It is an ancient road.

In Buddha's time 2600 years ago, he himself said, I am not teaching anything new. I am only cleaning up a road that has been there, it has been overgrown with weeds. I am cleaning it up so that people can walk over that road. This is the language he has used, and he added twice: *Eṣa dharma sanātanaḥ, eṣa dharma sanātanaḥ,* 'this is an eternal *dharma,* this is an eternal *dharma'*. Teachers like Buddha extend this invitation to all humanity, with full knowledge that humanity has the organic capacity to undertake this journey and succeed in it. Suppose we had not the needed organic capacity. What is the use of telling people all this? But, no!, even today's neurology will tell you that human beings have tremendous capacity through this versatile cerebral system, to achieve both knowledge of the

external world and knowledge of the Inner Self. This is the invitation Vedanta sends to all humanity, not any dogmas or sectarian doctrines. This is a human problem, and there is a human solution. That universality in language and tone, we can find in all these statements. And that is why the modern world is seeking a touch with this great and ancient wisdom. This is not knowledge, but wisdom; knowledge maturing into wisdom, and knowledge *must* mature into wisdom. Otherwise, knowledge will be dangerous. This is not the view of a religious teacher, but of a confirmed agnostic, namely, Bertrand Russell, who said (*Impact of Science on Society*):

'We are in the middle of a race between human knowledge as to means and human folly as to ends.'

And he ends that statement by saying, 'Unless men increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow.'

What a beautiful language! When you had no knowledge, you had less sorrow. When you have more knowledge, you have more sorrow! Convert knowledge into wisdom, again you will become free. This is the line of advance for modern humanity. This subject of *jñāna,* knowledge, physical and spiritual, is coming throughout this *Gītā*.

Here comes the significance of the words, *tapas* of knowledge, *jñāna tapas*. Everyday we are confronted with so many problems. We have to face them, solve them. We need strength for it. We have to develop that *jñāna* within. Both the knowledge of the external physical world and of our own inner world is *jñāna,* in which the latter becomes more significant.

We shall now deal with the eleventh verse. This verse is another important milestone on the road of harmony. India has one uniqueness, and that is harmony between one religion and another religion, harmony between religion and science, harmony between religion and atheism and agnosticism. India did not experience any conflict in their best days between these various groups. That attitude was inculcated in India from the time of the ancient *Ìg-Veda* up to Sri Ramakrishna in our own times: *Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti,* 'Truth is one; sages call it by various

names'. This is a precious asset which no other society in the world has. It is based upon India's high philosophical and spiritual vision of unity in diversity, the Advaitic vision; diverse expressions, behind all of which there is unity. That was a great teaching given to us by the Vedic sages first. Then the various political states in India, as well as the prevailing provincial states also followed this policy. Particularly, you will find Ashoka, the Mauryan emperor of third century BC, proclaiming this truth in his edicts on rocks and pillars:

'If you love your own religion and hate other religions, you harm your own religion, for, in religion *samavāya eva sādhuḥ,* "concord alone is correct".'

In that context comes Śrī Kṛṣṇa's great message in the *Gītā* in verse 11.

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम्।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः॥११॥

Ye yathā mām prapadyante tām tathaiva bhajāmyaham;
Mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ—4. 11

'In whatever way men and women worship me, in the same way do I fulfil their desires; (it is) my path, O son of Pṛthā, (that) people tread, in all ways.'

Ye yathā mām prapadyante, 'whatever paths men and women take in the world of religion': You take a path, another person takes another path. The paths are various. But they all come to Me. There is a very strong emphasis on this. 'You come by this road, I accept you. If you come by another road, I won't say, "I won't accept you unless you come by this road only." You can come by any road. I take you by whatever road you come.' All these religions are so many paths, so many roads as it were. Paths are many, but the goal is one. In all other religions, it is always one standard road. On that standard road, there are a few dogmas. Through that you come, and I will accept you. That is the teaching. Just the opposite of what India holds and practises. What a beautiful idea!

We have in Greek mythology the story of Procrustes's bed. Procrustes had a bed. Whenever people passed by, he will invite them: come and lie on

my bed. If the man is too long, beyond the bed, he will cut the leg and make it equal to the bed! When he is too short, he will pull the leg and make it equal to the bed! My bed is the standard. All people must be according to my standard bed. This is called in English Procrustean bed of dogmas and creeds. We never had this concept of Procrustean bed in India in religion. Never. We give a person a shirt which he needs for his body size. Not one standard shirt for all.

That is the tremendous contribution of Indian culture, coming not from any kind of expediency or policy, but out of a comprehensive spiritual vision, philosophical understanding: *Ye yathā mām prapadyante tāmstathaiva bhajāmyaham; Mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ*. Men and women always adopt a path which is leading to Me only. There is no 'standard path'. You must go by this path, not by that path. There is no such dogmatic standard like that. And so, this idea started from the *Ìg-Veda* with the utterance: *Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti,* 'Truth is one; sages call it by various names', then through the *Gītā*, through the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and today, reconfirmed through Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings: *Yato mat, tato path,* 'as many religions, so many pathways to God'. Practise harmony, practise concord. Don't quarrel in the name of religion. This blessed country is the only country, where this idea is highly appreciated, expounded, and practised by people and the state. If we are losing it today, it is because of our non-understanding of our own heritage. But India will always stick to this great ideal. Today, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda have come to strengthen this great ideal of mutual understanding and harmony among the various religions.

In the Roman Empire there were many religions. People could practise whatever religion they liked. That was the idea. There was a cynical attitude towards religions by the Roman political state and the intellectuals. That is expressed by Edward Gibbon in his famous book, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* The following remark comes there:

'The various cults and religions of the Roman Empire were believed to be equally true by the multitudes, equally false by the philosophers, and equally useful by the magistrates.'

The political state liked it: be busy with your religion, don't disturb the political system. So, they allowed religions to go on. That is a very cynical attitude, just the opposite of what you have in India. We appreciate these religions; our political or spiritual leaders, our intellectuals, they appreciate and encourage them, 'Go your own way; but don't quarrel and fight, for the goal is one and the paths are many.' By this teaching we established a positive approach towards inter-religious relations known as acceptance. We accept you. You are a Christian, we accept you. You are a Sikh, we accept you. You are a Muslim, we accept you. You are a Vaiṣṇava, we accept you.

This great perennial message of India was communicated to the modern world by Swami Vivekananda through his *Response to Welcome* at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions at Chicago on 11 September (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 1, p. 3):

'Sisters and Brothers of America,

'It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. …

'I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, who came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation. I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings:

"As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee."'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving prominence to that central theme of our culture: harmony in the world of religion. If religion doesn't help us to establish harmony, what else can help us? The greatest peace is in the heart of religion. But because this attitude was not cultivated, religion became a centre of strife, intolerance, persecution, violence, and war. It is least in Indian history because of this teaching not only by the sages but also by various political states. That is why we could welcome foreign religions like Judaism and Zoroastrianism in India: 'You are welcome, continue to practise your religion. We shall give all help to you.' That is what happened to the Parsis, the Zoroastrians when they were severely persecuted in Persia (now Iran) by the rising tide of Islam, and came to India in the 8th or 9th century AD; the king of a state in Gujarat welcomed them, gave them full freedom to practise their culture and their religion. This fascinating story, which has no parallel in any other country, is well narrated by Piloo Nanavarthy, a Parsi lady, in her book: *The Parsees*. Now this attitude is universal in India. We are not to be taught this thing, whereas in every other country one has to *teach* it, because that is not their way and attitude. 'If I am very religious, I am fanatical. If I cease to be religious, I become liberal. As a religious man, I cannot be liberal.' That was the Western and West Asian attitude.

British historian late Arnold Toynbee refers to an incident in the history of early Christianity in the Roman empire. Bishop Ambrose of Rome told Senator Symmachus of Rome that there is only one path to the Divine and that is Catholic Christianity. Symmachus, who followed the Pagan religion, refuted this exclusive claim and affirmed that there are several paths in religion. But soon Symmachus' voice, and of all paganism, were silenced by the Catholic Church. Narrating this, Toynbee remarks: the voice of Symmachus was silenced; but not the truth he upheld, because millions of Hindus have been and are upholding that voice!

This was followed by a century of violent Christian crusades against Islam in West Asia, and centuries of persecutions by Catholic missionaries and burning of many women at the stake.

Catholic Christianity became stronger and stronger century after century until the Protestant schism broke the Roman Catholic Church in the

sixteenth century involving thirty years of fierce civil war between both in Germany.

In the modern age, the problem of peaceful inter-religious relations still remains; but the Indian approach is slowly gaining ground. Bishop Ambrose's remark in the fourth century AD contrasts with Pope Paul VI's ideas about the impression of his visit to India in 1964. The following report of the statement of Pope Paul, after his return to Rome from his visit to India in 1964, appeared in the *Indian News*, Washington D.C., on 1st January 1965:

'Pope Paul VI, on December 22nd, described his visit to Bombay early this month as "full of incomparable human value for us." The Pontiff in his Christmas message to the world said:

"We might have stayed there (in Bombay) like a stranger, isolated, and surrounded only by our brothers in faith … but, on the contrary we met an entire people." He added: "It represented, it seemed to us, immense crowds of the vast Indian territory and those also of all Asia."

"This country is not Catholic", Pope Paul said, "but what courtesy, what opening of spirit, what an avid desire to get a glance, or a word, from this strange traveller from Rome!" The Pontiff said: "That was a moment of understanding, of community of mind. We do not know what these rejoicing crowds saw in us, but we saw in the crowds a humanity of great nobility, identified with its millenial cultural traditions. These crowds were not all Christians, but they were profoundly spiritual, and in so many ways so good and winning."'

Ours is different in India: because of my religion, I am liberal, I accept your religion, I practise harmony. From religion itself comes this impulse to respect every other religion. That is the significance of this statement of Śrī Kṛṣṇa: *Ye yathā mām prapadyante tāmstathaiva bhajāmyaham; Mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ*. All people follow various religious paths, crooked or straight, but ultimately leading to the divine. That is the nature of true religion. There are two dimensions to every religion. One is what makes it separate from the other religions; these are their ritual, dogma, creed; these belong to one side. The other side is meant

for spiritual development, spiritual growth; that is the higher side. The mystics represent the second part of religion, and mystics generally speak the same language in every religion: Islamic Sufi mystic, Hindu mystic, Buddhist mystic, and Jewish mystic, they all speak the same language, because they realized the One behind the many. Generally, they are more tolerant, and of more understanding attitudes, except when they are controlled by their rigid church or by a rigid orthodoxy of society. But in India we did not have any central church to control. We were free to experiment in the world of religion. New sects rise, new teachers come, followers come, we respect them. Not one of them was persecuted or killed. In religion, variety is essential. The more the types of religion, the more people will get satisfied. A standard religion cannot satisfy everybody. Just like food: you must have a variety of food. My taste is different from yours, but food is food. That will nourish you, whatever be the food you take. So, in this way, India has been taught this great lesson throughout the ages and it is not going to be otherwise in the modern period.

Don't you have communal conflicts and all that?, some one may ask. You will find that almost all of them are based not on religion but on political factors in India today. Religiously there is no quarrel between people and people. But some religions are narrow. They don't believe that any other religion can be true. That has to change. That will change in the Indian context in the coming decades. So, the history of religion has been partly good, partly bad. Hereafter, it will be only good, when this Indian influence comes to influence all the religions of the world. Actually, it is happening. Christianity is changing fast. Christian writers are opening themselves to inspiration from non-Christian sources. That centuries-old rigid mind is not there. So, a big change is coming over Christianity. Dr. Ishananda Vempany sent me his book, *Krishna and Christ,* which he wrote recently. A very serious book of about 300 pages. I wrote a Foreword also to that book at the author's request. He is a Jesuit Father from Ahmedabad, and had stayed with me in this Math. I read through the book; it breathed respect and reverence to non-Christian religions. Such books are coming out more and more now. Formerly, it was not so, only twisting other people's ideas, presenting them in a bad way. Take the best of your religion, compare it with the worst of another religion, that is how books were

written till now. Now, you are finding books written differently: respect for every religion, respect for the ideas that are there. 'That' is one approach, 'this' is another approach.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's teaching of harmony is going to influence more and more people in all parts of the world. In this age, we are coming closer and closer, and therefore, this is the only attitude that can work; attitude of respect and reverence to your own belief cannot go along with the attitude that the other persons are on the wrong path, and that you are trying to make him or her to come to the 'right' path. In every religion there are such fanatics. But that has no future. Future is on the lines of harmony, concord, tolerance, understanding. So, this teaching of Śrī Kṛṣṇa will inspire more and more people in all parts of the world, with the *Gītā* itself being translated into all languages and with millions of people reading this great book. So, here is that eleventh verse conveying this important teaching of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He himself was possessed of a universal mind, embracing every type of worship, every type of religion. That he has also shown in his life. The next *śloka* says:

काङ्क्षन्तः कर्मणां सिद्धिं यजन्त इह देवताः।
क्षिप्रं हि मानुषे लोके सिद्धिर्भवति कर्मजा॥१२॥

Kāṅkṣantaḥ karmaṇām siddhim yajanta iha devatāḥ;
Kṣipram hi mānuṣe loke siddhirbhavati karmajā— 4. 12

'Longing for success in action, in this world, (people) worship the gods; because success resulting from action is quickly attained in the human world.'

There is one supreme divine Being, who is the Self of all, and who is also the Self of the universe. That is the central core of Vedanta. But many sects are based on devotion to particular gods or goddesses, deities, and some supernatural powers; such religions are also there. *Kāṅkṣantaḥ karmaṇām siddhim yajanta iha devatāḥ,* 'people worship various *devatas,* deities, expecting some favour'. I am doing some work, I want your favour. So, they worship various gods and goddesses. And this is okay. In this earth, such actions produce their good results. *Kṣipram hi mānuṣe loke*

siddhirbhavati karmajā, 'actions produce their results quickly in this human world'. You can do so, but real religion will come only when you understand the truth that these various deities are expressions of the one and the same divine truth as expressed in the *Ìg-Veda: Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*. That knowledge must come. Then only, pure religion will come. Here we are trying to exploit gods for our own purposes. We don't love God. Some people want to squeeze gods to get some advantage to themselves. That is not correct religion. But Vedanta does not condemn this; it respects this also.

During his speech in the 1893 Chicago World Parliament of Religions, Swami Vivekananda emphasized this comprehensive approach of *Sanātana Dharma* or Hinduism (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 1, p. 6):

'From the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists, and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion.'

In the *Gītā* you will find that even the most ordinary idea of religion is respected. Nothing is condemned. 'That person' understands religion that much; he or she is observing religion in that light. When the understanding changes, he or she also will change. A child writes a lesson in the English language, very wrongly, pronouncing wrongly, but we don't condemn him. At that stage, that is all what he can do. But, when he grows up he will be a first-class scholar. Similarly in religion, we can be in its kindergarten, or primary, or high school, or university. Various levels of understanding religion are there. So, we always respect the religion of the people. Wherever one turns to worship the divine through some deities, it is really the worship of the One divine. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say later on in the seventh chapter, 'all such worship of deities ultimately becomes worship of me; they are seeking me through these various expressions of gods and goddesses.'

Now, we come to a statement in verse 13; it is a verse which many people have misunderstood, and is a centre of controversy, because it refers to a social problem. So far as the *Gītā* is concerned, the wordings are very, very clear. Here is that *śloka*. The main purpose of the *śloka* is to tell that '*I*

do things, yet I am unattached.' So, it gives an example of non-attachment, that is all. The statement is this:

चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः।
तस्य कर्तारमपि मां विद्ध्यकर्तारमव्ययम्॥१३॥

Cāturvarṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ;
Tasya kartāramapi mām viddhyakartāramavyayam—4. 13

'The fourfold *varṇa* system was created by me, based on the differentiation of *guṇa* and *karma.* Though I am the author thereof, know me to be the non-doer, and changeless.'

This social organization based on the four *varṇas,* the four types of people—*brāhmaṇa, kṣtriya, vaiśya, sūdra*—exists in any and every society, according to their inclination and capacity: *guṇa, karma,* 'according to their quality and action'. That will determine whether one is a *brāhmaṇa,* or a *kṣatriya,* or a *vaiśya,* or a *sūdra.* Any family can have offsprings belonging to any one of these types. One will take to military, another will take to business, a third will take to agriculture, and another will take to labour. In this way you will find various people taking to various *karmas* or actions, professions according to the inclinations of their minds, their *guṇas*. That shows the freedom of the individual. Whatever you want to take up as your job, you are free to do so. That is the original meaning of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's statement on this particular subject. Society needs organization—organization into groups— and these organizations we did in India as first labour; then business, agriculture, industry; then we come to administration, defence, political affairs, etc.; then we come to high intellectual and spiritual guidance by a small group of people. Every society has all the four groups. *But what became wrong in India is that, in later ages, it became hereditary*. That is evil number one. By hereditary means we cramped the system as it were. Secondly, we gave more privileges for some and less privileges for others. These two aspects ruined the whole system. So, remove those two evils and we shall find this is what is happening, and what is good, everywhere.

In America you can find this expression very well. In any family you will find, a student says, 'I shall join the military'; 'you are free to do so'. He is a *kṣatriya,* he does the duty of a *kṣatriya.*', or 'I will take to business', *vaiśya;* 'I shall be a labourer', *sūdra;* 'I shall be a priest or spiritual seeker, I will be a *brāhmaṇa* then.' It is up to you. You are perfectly free. When that freedom to chose what you like according to your *guṇa* and *karma* is there, then a society becomes healthy. But when you stop that free choice, people become tied down to their hereditary profession. Then it becomes narrowed down more and more. *And it becomes an evil when special privileges are claimed by one group over the others*. That is what happened to Indian *jāti-vyavasthā,* or caste-system. The *brāhmaṇa* and *kṣatriya* commanded more prestige, more privilege, more power; others had very little power and status; even human status was not allowed to some of them. That kind of distortion took place later on, and today we are trying to break away from this distortion. But, groups will remain. Somebody will be highly spiritually inclined, somebody will be exercising power in the political field, somebody will be busy with business and industry, somebody will be labourers working here and there, according to the situation, according to one's capacity, etc. But no special privilege will be allowed to anybody. Swami Vivekananda said therefore in a lecture in England on 'Vedanta and Privilege', a famous lecture, that differences will be there in every society. Different functions are performed by different people. That is natural. But 'whenever special privileges raise their heads, knock them on the head', said Swami Vivekananda. Perfect equality, that is democracy. So, in a democracy also you can have the *cātur varṇyam* minus its evil features. Every society has it. That will not change. This is the original conception.

You find today so many groups. Small industry becomes one group. People engaged in it have got their own Merchants' Chamber, or Industrial Association. Teachers have their own group. We all make groups. We have hundreds of groups in every society. But India classified them broadly into four types beginning with the *brāhmaṇa* type. When we dealt with the introduction to the *Gītā* by Śaṅkarācārya at the beginning of these discourses on the *Gītā*, we referred to this subject that the goal of human life and evolution is for everyone to achieve *brāhmaṇahood, brāhmaṇatva;* what does it mean?, absolutely moral, self-restrained, full of compassion,

never needing a policeman to make him or her behave, because he or she is well restrained within oneself. That enlightened person is the *brāhmaṇa* type. Every society has this *brāhmaṇa* type. How many beautiful *brāhmaṇas,* Vivekananda said, he had seen in America! And he writes in the letter, 'what a beautiful type I have seen here!' So also, you can see them in Japan, or in China, everywhere. In Soviet Russia, you will find them. Then the *kṣatriya* type: ever ready to help people, even though it may cause trouble to oneself. He is ever ready, with that kind of chivalrous attitude. They are the *kṣatriya* type. And then there are those very good in business, industry, agriculture: the *vaiśya* type. And good labourers, the world will always have plenty of labour class. But they will not be deprived of privileges: food, shelter, clothing, everything will be there. And they will also earn well. And you will find one profound truth that, from the point of view of money earnings, in the original Indian social organization, the higher you go, the less becomes your remuneration. Up to *vaiśya,* you have got remuneration. *Vaiśyas* earn plenty. A *kṣatriya* will always care for honour, over and above money. And the *brāhmaṇa* cares neither for honour nor for money. His is the simplest life. That is why the Indian *brāhmaṇa* was the poorest and simplest priesthood in the world. I have seen *brāhmaṇas* living a beautiful life—very contended and happy—on fifteen rupees a month. And yet what brilliant intellects they had.

So, in this way, *brāhmaṇa* is a type; *kṣatriya* also is a type; so also, *vaiśya* and *sūdra*. So, what is the goal of all these social divisions? India said: the *brāhmaṇa* type. Ultimately, all must evolve into the *brāhmaṇa* type. He or she is a *brāhmaṇa* who is not selfish, who feels oneness with all, who has realized God in this very life. When I referred to this subject in the Introduction, I read out from Buddha's teachings from *Dhammapada,* the chapter called *Brāhmaṇa Vaggo,* the chapter on *brāhmaṇa* whom Buddha honours. A man of the untouchable group, like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who ably piloted the Indian Constitution Bill in the Constituent Assembly, could easily become not only a Law Minister but also a prime minister; he was a *kṣatriya,* though coming from the scheduled caste. What a glorious life he led, what an intellect he had! I had spent one hour with him in his house in Bombay just before the commencement of the Indian Constituent Assembly Sessions. So, that is the new India taking shape, removing all the

evils from that ossified caste system, which have ruined our national life for centuries together.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is primarily emphasizing in this verse the truth that, even though he created this social organization, he himself is perfectly detached and is not the doer at all. The stress is on this second line. 'Even though I work, I am detached'. Detachment is a great word. I was reading a latest book on the new type of thinking we need in the modern age for stabilizing international situations, where this subject of 'non-attachment' is introduced. Detachment is absolutely necessary for the higher development of the human being. *Gītā's* central teaching is this concept of detachment. Interest is there, zest is there, but detachment also is there. A wonderful idea! You work hard, work with great energy, but the mind is detached. That is the central teaching. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'I am working very hard for the welfare of the world, but I am perfectly unattached.' That is a lesson to all of us, and even for management executives. In the book which I read, this idea is given: develop detachment. You can do better work, more creative work, when the mind is detached. That is the language used there. Creativity cannot come from the attached state of mind. From a detached state of mind only it can come. Such books are coming out in good numbers in modern times. So, this is the emphasis in this particular section. Now comes verse 14, to elaborate this idea of detachment.

न मां कर्माणि लिम्पन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा।
इति मां योऽभिजानाति कर्मभिर्न स बध्यते॥१४॥

Na mām karmāṇi limpanti na me karmaphale spṛhā;
Iti mām yo'bhijānāti karmabhirna sa badhyate — 4. 14

'Actions do not taint me, nor have I any thirst for the result of action. He who knows me thus is not fettered by action.'

'No action can ever taint me', *na mām karmāṇi limpanti;* similarly, *na me karmaphale spṛhā,* 'nor do I have any attachment for the fruits of actions'. *Iti mām yo'bhijānāti*, 'those who understand me in this way', *karmabhirna sa badhyate,* 'will also be free from the bondage of action'. He or she can do all actions, but those actions will not bind him or her. If

one understands my status like this, and tries to practise it in one's own life, he or she also will not be bound by actions. So, the stress is on action, but with a particular attitude. That attitude is detachment. In the beginning it will be very difficult to practise; there is no harm in that, attachment will be there, one will fumble, but let him or her continue, and by such effort such a person will come to that state of detachment when one's spiritual strength becomes more and more. None expects us to be highly detached people on the first effort. As you begin your life, as Swami Vivekananda says in his famous book *Karma-yoga,* you will find that your mind is fully attached; it doesn't matter. You continue; keep the teaching before you; practise a little detachment in one or another situation; slowly you will gain strength. Then a time will come when you can say, 'Yes, I now feel I am detached.' When I separate my self from the body, I separate the contained from the container. Now they are mixed up. I begin to understand that I am the infinite Self, this body-mind complex is only an instrument. It comes and goes, I remain. A spirit of detachment comes at this stage.

Sri Ramakrishna compares the two situations to a green coconut and a ripe coconut. Take a green coconut, break it open, you will find the kernel; scoop the kernel, you will scoop a little bit of the shell also along with it, because the kernel is attached to the shell. Now take a dry coconut, the shell and the kernel or copra are separate. A *kaḍa, kaḍa* sound you will hear when you shake it. Similarly, the human mind can become unattached. That is the challenge given by the *Gītā* with respect to all work. Especially in this highly industrial age, when work creates tension, blood pressure, and bad moods, the only way is to practise detachment. Then any amount of work will not trouble you. So, detachment, non-attachment, these words are used in the *Gītā* again and again.

Mahatma Gandhi wrote his *Gītā* with the title, *Anāsakti-yoga*, 'the *yoga* of non-attachment'. *āsakti* means attachment. *Anāsakti* means non-attachment. That is the *Gītā*message of *yoga.*

एवं ज्ञात्वा कृतं कर्म पूर्वैरपि मुमुक्षुभिः।
कुरु कर्मैव तस्मात्त्वं पूर्वैः पूर्वतरं कृतम्॥१५॥

Evam jñātvā kṛtam karma pūrvairapi mumukṣubhiḥ;

Kuru karmaiva tasmāt tvam pūrvaiḥ pūrvataram kṛtam —4. 15

‘Knowing thus, the ancient seekers after spiritual freedom also performed action. Do thou, therefore, perform action alone as did the ancients in olden times.’

What a beautiful idea! ‘It is with this attitude that many seekers of spiritual freedom in ancient times performed action,’ *evam jñātvā kṛtam karma pūrvairapi mumukṣubhiḥ.* And in this attitude they could also attain *mokṣa* or spiritual liberation, though they were engaged in the thick of work itself. Since that is so, *kuru karmaiva tasmāt tvam,* ‘you also perform action’; *pūrvaiḥ pūrvataram kṛtam,* ‘as the ancients did in the ancient way’; you also do it in your own way, in the modern period. Work will continue but nature of work may change; detachment will come and along with it spiritual freedom.

In one *śloka* or verse this idea is expressed. It is quoted by Lokamānya Bāl Gangādhar Tilak in his *GītāRahasya:*

Vivekī sarvathā mukto kurvato nāsti kartṛtā;
Alepavādam āśritya śrī kṛṣṇa janakau yathā —

Vivekī, ‘a person of discrimination’; *sarvathā mukto,* ‘with the mind ever-free’; *kurvato nāsti kartṛtā,* ‘though he or she is doing action, he or she does not feel oneself as an agent of action’. How?, *alepavādam āśritya,* ‘by accepting the philosophy of non-attachment’. *Alepa* means ‘nothing sticking on me’. *Lepa* means sticking; just put some sandalwood paste on your body, it is called *lepana. Alepavādam,* ‘the theory of non-attachment, non-sticking; *āśritya,* ‘depending on that truth’. Then two examples are given: *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Janakau yathā,* like Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Janaka; they are famous examples of very hard working people, endowed with the spirit of detachment; you also do similarly.

We have no possibility of renouncing work; our life cannot go on without work. So, work is essential: *kuru karamaiva tasmāt tvam,* ‘therefore, you do work all the time’, but with this attitude. That is Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s advice: *pūrvaiḥ pūrvataram kṛtam,* ‘as the ancients did in ancient times’. Work or action is a very difficult subject; the next *śloka* refers to it:

किं कर्म किमकर्मेति कवयोऽप्यत्र मोहिता:।
तत्ते कर्म प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ज्ञात्वा मोक्ष्यसेऽशुभात्॥१६॥

Kim karma kimakarmeti kavayo'pyatra mohitāḥ;
Tatte karma pravakṣyāmi yat jñātvā mokṣyase'śubhāt —4. 16

'Even sages are bewildered as to what is action and what is inaction. I shall, therefore, tell you what action is, by knowing which you will be freed from evil.'

Kim karma, 'what is action?' *Kim akarmeti, '*and what is inaction?' On this subject, *kavayo'pyatra mohitāḥ,* 'even the sages are deluded on this subject'. It is not easy to understand. *Tatte karma pravakṣyāmi,* 'therefore, I shall speak to you about *karma*'; *yat jñātvā,* 'knowing which'; *mokṣyase aśubhāt,* 'you will be freed from all evil' arising from action'. I will give you a philosophy by which you can do all action, but you will not be bound; like the lotus leaf which is not wetted by water, you will remain free. That is the nature of the mind when it is trained in this spirit of detachment. This is the first *śloka* on the subject. And the second one is the Mount Everest of thought on the subject. It is a very crisp statement with deep meaning. And the language used is almost a language of self-contradiction: *karmaṇi akarma yaḥ paśyet, akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ,*'one who sees inaction in action and action in inaction'. Before we take up that subject, we shall listen to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's prefatory remarks:

कर्मणो ह्यपि बोद्धव्यं बोद्धव्यं च विकर्मण:।
अकर्मणश्च बोद्धव्यं गहना कर्मणो गति:॥१७॥

Karmaṇo hyapi boddhavyam boddhavyam ca vikarmaṇaḥ;
Akarmaṇaśca boddhavyam gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ —4. 17

'For verily, (the true nature) even of *karma* or action should be known, as also, that of *vikarma* or forbidden action, and of *akarma* or inaction: the nature of *karma* is deep and impenetrable.'

'You must know what is *karma*', *karmaṇo hyapi boddhavyam; boddhavyam ca vikarmaṇaḥ,* 'you must also know what is *vikarma* or wrong action; *akarmaṇaśca boddhavyam,* 'you must also know what is

akarma or inaction'. 'The way of *karma* is extremely mysterious', *gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ.*

The late eminent British educationist, L.P. Jacks, discusses this subject in his book, *Education of the Whole Man.* It echoes the *yoga* philosophy of the *Gītā:-*

'Labour turns into leisure when art is applied to it. Leisure turns into labour when science traces it to its roots. For no two men, are the meaning and value of leisure the same. They vary according to the man who has the leisure and according to the labour which has preceded it. Idle rich versus idle poor.

'Today, to have leisure is to be at the mercy of other people. A man is no longer master of his leisure "in his own interest", as they put it. Today, the more leisure a man has, the more active he is in destroying others' leisure and they his leisure. Leisure is the time we spend in mutual botheration.

'Thus the use we make of our leisure depends upon the use others make of their leisure. …

'When labour merely tires the body without interesting the mind, man utilises leisure largely in search of external excitements. Industries spring up for catering to these excitements. This means labour of an increasing section of the population. Thus, leisure involves labour. … Thus every increase in the leisure of a community does not bring a corresponding decrease in its labour. It would have been a decrease if leisure were invariably spent in sleep or silent meditation. But that is not the way modern civilization teaches man to spend his leisure. Except for sleep, the amount of which, I suppose, does not vary from age to age, the leisure of a modern man is the time when his demand for the labour of others is most exacting, and his consumption of commodities most active (p. 122).

'As civilization advances, leisure will increase and the centre of gravity of social problems will shift from the labour end to the leisure end of life. The acid test of a civilization lies in the use that is made of its leisure. A civilization can stand this test only when it makes spirituality the ground and goal of its life.'

I remember friends in Delhi telling me in the 1950's that they were eager to attend my Sunday evening discourses on the *Gītā* in the Ramakrishna Mission. When they are about to start for the Mission, a friendly family turns up as guests. Seeing this happen often, they told me that they began to leave home after lunch and go to any park and turn up in time at the Mission for the lecture. This is one illustration of the above remark of Dr. L.P. Jacks: 'Leisure is the time we spend in mutual botheration.'

In this context, it is interesting to mention that among the more than one thousand audience, sitting cross-legged on the lawn, there were men and women and students, members of the Union Secretariat and the Defence Services, and some ambassadors of foreign countries including Mr. Elsworth Bunker, U.S. Ambassador in Delhi, and Mrs. Bunker. Some officers also told me that when they go out on official tours, they made it a point to return by Sunday noon in order not to miss the elevating and refreshing ideas of the *Gītā.*

'The way of *karma* is deeply mysterious', *gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ,* says Śrī Kṛṣṇa in verse 17. And now, in the next verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives that famous dictum:

कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्म यः।
स बुद्धिमान्मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत्॥१८॥

Karmaṇyakarma yaḥ paśyed akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ;
Sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt—4. 18

'One who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, is intelligent among human beings, he or she is a *yogi* and a doer of all action.'

This is a very high level of thought in the whole *Gītā*. 'One who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, he or she is a real *yogi* and the most intelligent person, and the doer of all action.' *Karmaṇi akarma yaḥ paśyet,* 'seeing inaction in action'. How can we see that? Looks contradictory, but it is not so; in human experience this can be perfectly realized to see inaction in action, and action in inaction. *Sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu,* 'he or she is the most intelligent of persons', *sa yuktaḥ,* 'he or

she is a *yogī*', that is, the state we have to achieve eventually, when we realize our true nature.

This idea is echoed very beautifully in Chinese thought, in Taoism and partly in Confucian thought. There they call it 'no work'. 'No work' is real work. Work is no work at all. It is a question of agency and attachment. When these two are not there, work ceases to be work, it becomes a play, it becomes spontaneous, it becomes natural. So, that is how the idea of work comes when there is effort, struggle, tension. When you become thoroughly detached, then all that tension goes away. You are working, but you don't feel that you are working. What a beautiful idea! Even in normal life, you can see a baby is sick at night and the mother is keeping awake to tend the baby's body. She doesn't feel the strain of that work at all. When there is such love, none will feel that strain. But a paid person will not have the same experience, because there is no spontaneous love there. With a little spiritual development, work ceases to be a burden, ceases to be a *drudgery*. I have used a word which is very current in this modern context. Increasingly, today's industrial civilization is teaching people that work is a drudgery. Joy must be found outside work. That is why too many holidays. As soon as Friday evening comes, millions of people are running out for a holiday. These five days were all drudgery. Let us have joy outside the five days. That seems to be the modern theory. In fact, so many Western writers have written on the subject. I once read an English writer writing thus in a paper:

People leave London on Friday afternoon, go by car, on the way there are so many cars to negotiate, you become angry, you create trouble, then go to the seaside, so many people are there, you don't have vacant place there, you get angry there also, and when you finally return on Monday morning or Sunday night, you are more tired than you were when you left on Friday evening. This is happening all over the advanced part of the world. You can see plenty of it on the Mediterranean coast.

It will happen here in India also, because we separate joy from work. Work as a drudgery, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will not allow that attitude. There is joy in work also. From one joy to another joy is alright. But from drudgery to joy is not at all alright. Work can be full of joy, provided there is love in the

heart. Then everything becomes fine. You can carry a heavier burden if there is love in the heart. That is one lesson that we must learn. People who are posted to defend the country in the Himalayan frontier, if they have the spirit of love for the nation, they will do their work happily and efficiently. Similarly, our administrative officers do devoted service when posted to faraway districts. By attachment you rarely do very great work and remain sane.

While working, you are not only working but also expressing your personality in work. In work when you express your personality, it is a wonderful spiritual experience. The *Gītā* is trying to explain that idea, that work itself is a spiritual education. If you want joy on a holiday, you can do so, not because work is a drudgery, but because I want an extra holiday, an extra day of quiet life: there is no harm in that. Never treat work as drudgery. *Gītā* will not allow it. Find joy in work. What a beautiful idea! Even the simplest work, you can find joy in it, because you have put spiritual value into the work. Work itself is just an external action. But it is my mind that gives value to the work that I do. I inject that value into work; then I find it is fine and quite pleasant. No tension. So, 'work on, without tension', Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said in 3. 30, *yuddhyasva vigatajvaraḥ,* 'carry on the battle of life without inner tension, inner fever'; *jvara* means 'fever or tension'; *vigata* means 'without'. Work on, work hard, for the good of all, said Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the third chapter. So, he says,

Karmaṇyakarma yaḥ paśyed akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ;
Sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt —

In some books on management published in America, there are Chinese writers also amongst them, they quote from these Chinese authors and show that with this tremendous detachment, you can carry heavy burden and do much work without feeling that you are working at all. I give here a part of my lecture on 'Divine Grace', which appears in the first volume of *The Eternal Values for a Changing Society* published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 7. There you will find that the thinking is similar.

Says R.G.H. Siu, Chinese scientist at the M.I.T., U.S.A., in his *Tao of Science,* p. 76:

‘To be intimately versed in the knowledge of decentralization, the executive must have a sense of the Taoist doctrine of inaction. Accomplishment is attained through the art of doing nothing. This is a somewhat difficult idea to put across, because so many people are quick to confuse it with loafing. But we may get a glimpse of the notion from Chuang-Tse:

“The student of knowledge (aims at) learning day by day;

A student of Tao (aims at) losing day by day.

By continual losing,

One reaches doing nothing;

By doing nothing, everything is done.

He who conquers the world often does so by doing nothing.

When one is compelled to do something,

The world is already beyond his conquering.”’

Further, (ibid., pp. 157–58):

‘In essence, the action of the philosopher executive is guided by the proper pace of knowledge. Inwardly, he cultivates spiritual enduring; outwardly, he performs social beneficence. He develops, in the phraseology of the old Chinese, “sageness within and kingliness without”.’

If even a small percentage of India’s legislators and administrators, from the village pañcayat level to the Union Government level, develop themselves in this way, our democratic state will become strong, steady, and peaceful in an unprecedented way.

Detachment is detachment from the ego or the lower self which is under the control of the ever-selfish genetic system. Detachment is not possible until one recognizes the Truth proclaimed by Vedanta or the science of human possibilities, that, in every human being, there is the ever pure, ever free higher Self which is the true nature of all.

There is the famous *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā,* which is a small book of very high Advaita Vedanta thought. There it is mentioned (18. 61):

Nivṛttirapi mūḍhasya pravṛttirupajāyate;
Pravṛttirapi dhīrasya nivṛtti phala bhāgini —

A wonderful *śloka*. 'Inactivity of a foolish man transforms itself into activity; the activity of a wise man enjoys the fruits of inactivity or inaction.'

If I am an intelligent person, even though I am working, I will feel I am having leisure. If I am thoughtless, I may have taken leave and gone on a holiday, yet I will often be in tension; the holiday has done no good to me, because the training of the mind has not taken place. So, that *śloka* is very very important. *Nivṛttirapi mūḍhasya pravṛttirupajāyate*, 'the *nivṛtti* or inaction of a fool becomes *pravṛtti* or action.' *Nivṛtti* means 'withdrawal from action'; *pravṛtti* means 'entering into action'. This subject of *pravṛtti* versus *nivṛtti*, introduced by Śaṅkarācārya in his introduction to the *Gītā* sloka-in-eng-last-line, we had discussed in the Introduction of this book. So, *nivṛtti* becomes *pravṛtti* for a foolish person. For a wise person, *pravṛtti* becomes *nivṛtti;* even while acting, he or she is perfectly detached, and, as if not acting at all. That is the idea expressed in several books of the Vedanta literature as well as in Chinese thought. So, this is the idea we must keep in view when we work. From morning till evening, a housewife endowed with this attitude can go on working, attending to family members and others; and yet she can feel fresh in the evening. If that is possible, it will be wonderful. *Gītā* says it is possible. Many have attained that state. That comes from the spirit of detachment, the spirit of love and concern for others. *All these things together constitute the spiritual attitude to life.* Otherwise, one can be a complaining mind all the time. There are people who will work hard from morning till evening, always grumbling and complaining. What fun is there in that? Just like a bull driving a cart. Simply going on under this heavy load. What is the use of such a life? There must be joy, there must be satisfaction. I have to get it myself. Nobody else is going to give it to me as a donation. That is a challenge before everyone. Nothing is great in work itself. It is the attitude of the worker that evaluates a work as good or bad. That lesson, the *Gītā* teaches again and again. If the attitude is good, the work is good. If the attitude is wrong, your work is wrong. So, control your attitude. It is in your power.

Thus, Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks of detachment, which is the central theme of the *Gītā* teaching on work. That this little ego centred in my organic system is not my true Self. I am something infinite, spiritually one with all. That knowledge must come slowly. Then you get a tremendous sense of detachment. So much of cushioning effect of the pressures from the world you get that way. Just like two railway coaches, when they touch each other, there is a cushioning effect, by the bumper that is provided at the back of the coaches, which has a spring action. You don't feel a jerk thereby. So, in the mind, we have plenty of space behind. We can always find space so that no shock will reach us. The deepest is the Atman. So, a little closer towards it, you feel you can do work better. More work, less tiresomeness, less tension. That is a great teaching for all people, because all of us have to work to earn our living and to discharge our social responsibilities. So, this philosophy is meant for all, especially today when work has become such an important factor of human development and welfare.

Verse 18 contains a paradoxical statement; but many logical paradoxes are resolved by the logic of daily life; actual life breaks through all these paradoxes. So, this particular statement affirms: 'One who sees inaction in action and action in inaction, he or she is the most intelligent of human beings, is a true *yogi,* and the doer of all action.'

We can understand the *Gītā* better after studying Vivekananda literature once. That is what I did, and that is what I saw how effective it is.

Having spoken about this truth that, when the mind is properly disciplined, and if there is perfect detachment of mind, then working will be as good as non-working, it will mean relaxation. In work itself you find relaxation. This is a profound message to men and women in the modern age. We had learnt in the twentieth century to associate all work with drudgery, and to seek for pleasure outside work; that is an evil attitude. We should overcome it. There is a joy in work also. When you put your soul in your work and feel a sense of detachment, so far as the lower ego is concerned, you discover the truth of it. But because of this wrong attitude that work is a drudgery, today there is an experience of boredom among people while working. This word 'boredom' does not appear in the eighteenth century Dr. Johnson's English Dictionary! In the United States I

found the currency of this new word. Even children telling parents, 'Mummy, I am bored', though there is so much excitement around. How can one be bored in this most exciting age? Something is wrong with the mind. This word 'boring, boredom' is a new word in English. When I read it in Gerald Heard's article, I wanted to make sure that it is correct. So, in Chicago, I sent for Dr. Johnson's English Dictionary from the Chicago Public Library. And I searched under 'B' for boredom. No such word at all. People were not 'bored' at that time! Now, it is there everywhere. Boredom, boredom, I am bored, bored. The spiritual emptiness of man cannot be better demonstrated except through this experience of boredom—not by old people who get jostled in life and experience boredom; that we can understand; but by children of 8 to 12 years of age. If *they* get bored, something is wrong in the whole civilization. That is why in this *Gītā* teaching, work is made to become relaxation. You can try it in your own life, test the truth of it, because these are all not dogmas but truths about the human being by those who had experienced them: work, heavy work and yet you feel relaxed. How can it happen?, because of a trained mind. If the mind is left to itself, it will play all these tricks; during work you will feel a sense of drudgery; and you feel pleasure outside work, constantly running about here and there on holidays. Now this is an extremely wrong attitude. If you trace work to its roots, you will find inaction there. If you trace holiday and inaction to the root, you will find work at the other end. This is Dr. L.P. Jack's remark quoted earlier. So, in this way, *gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ,* Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said, 'the way of *karma* is mysterious'. Don't think it is easy to understand what is *karma* and what is *akarma,* and what is *vikarma.* This is what is explained in that one single verse 18, by saying that there is a state of mind where heavy work doesn't make you feel a sense of heaviness. You feel relaxed, because you have touched some deeper reality within yourself. You are not the ego, constantly in tension. As Śaṅkarācārya says in the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (142):

Bhānu-prabhā samjanitābhrapaṅktiḥ
bhānum tirodhāya vijṛmbhate yathā;
ātmoditāhamkṛtiḥ ātma-tattvam
tathā tirodhāya vijṛmbhate svayam —

‘As the mass of clouds born out of the sun hides the sun and proclaims itself, so the ego born out of the infinite Atman hides the Atman and proclaims itself as the self.’

Work from the ego point of view is all tension. But behind the ego, there is an infinite spiritual dimension. When that is realized even a little, then extra work won’t make one feel that it is heavy. Even ordinary experiences will tell you: whenever there is love in the heart, the worker doesn’t feel heavy. When there is no love in the heart, even a little work makes one feel very heavy. As soon as you have love for a particular cause, you can do anything; a man carries a heavy load for his beloved. That load is not heavy for him, because love for the beloved takes away the heaviness of the load, though the heaviness is actually a fact. But, he does not feel it, because his mind has transformed the situation. Hundreds of instances are there in human life where this truth has been verified by many people. Others can also verify it; and so the teaching is here: do hard work, but have a spirit of detachment based on a larger love. You don’t even need a separate holiday. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving a profound message to humanity in modern civilization: Do work, do go for leisure also, not by treating work as a drudgery and seeking for some relaxation outside the world of work. It will be a passage not from boredom to joy, but from joy to joy; that should be the way of human life. And so, in verse 18, and in a few verses thereafter also, these ideas are expressed. Some of them relate to highly developed spiritual minds. Ordinary people have to take as much of it as they can digest. But the teaching is there. So, some of the verses, you may feel, do not relate to you; quite correct. They relate to you fractionally, but they relate fully to somebody else who has got more spiritual strength.

यस्य सर्वे समारम्भाः कामसङ्कल्पवर्जिताः।
ज्ञानाग्निदग्धकर्माणं तमाहुः पण्डितं बुधाः॥१९॥

Yasya sarve samārambhāḥ kāmasaṅkalpavarjitāḥ;
Jñānāgni dagdha karmāṇam tamāhuḥ paṇḍitam budhāḥ—4. 19

‘Whose undertakings are all devoid of *kāma,* sensual desire, and *saṅkalpa,* desire for results, and whose actions are burnt by the fire of knowledge, him or her, the sages call wise.’

Tam āhuḥ paṇḍitam budhāḥ, ‘wise people say that such people are *paṇḍitas*’*,* they are really spiritual. What kind of people? *Yasya sarve samārambhāḥ kāma saṅkalpa varjitāḥ*, ‘all those whose undertakings are without the stimulus of *kāma* and *saṅkalpa*’; the attitude, ‘this I must get’, is *kāma saṅkalpa.* That is not there behind their undertakings. And what has happened in their case? *Jñānāgni dagdha karmāṇam*, ‘all their actions and undertakings have been burnt away in the fire of *jñāna*’*,* fire of *ātmajñāna,* ‘I am the Atman, I am the pure Self’. In that fire, he or she has burnt away all these actions. Here *jñāna* is compared to fire. Such a person, wise people say, is a *paṇḍita. Paṇḍita* is a great word in Sanskrit, though today it has got a very ordinary meaning. A cook is called *paṇḍit,* in north India. That is the nature of *paṇḍita* today. Here *paṇḍā* means *ātmaviṣayā buddhiḥ* says Śaṅkarācārya, ‘the *buddhi* which is turned towards the Atman, that type of *buddhi* is called *paṇḍā*’. One who has that *paṇḍā* or *buddhi* is a *paṇḍita.* Two or three definitions of a *paṇḍita* are given in this *Gītā;* one is here. The other is: ‘one who sees the same Atman in a holy person, in an ordinary human being, in a cow, in a dog, in everyone, that person is a *paṇḍita.*’ *Paṇḍitā samadarśinaḥ,* it is said in that *śloka* 5. 18. A *paṇḍita* is a *samadarśī.* He doesn’t look up and down: that man is high, this man is low. No such attitude, he sees only the same Atman in every being. That is also the definition of the word *paṇḍita.* Then comes the next verse, verse 20.

त्यक्त्वा कर्मफलासङ्गं नित्यतृप्तो निराश्रयः।
कर्मण्यभिप्रवृत्तोऽपि नैव किञ्चित्करोति सः॥२०॥

Tyaktvā karmaphalāsaṅgam nityatṛpto nirāśrayaḥ;
Karmaṇyabhiprvṛtto’pi naiva kiñcit karoti saḥ — 4. 20

‘Forsaking the clinging to fruits of action, ever satisfied, depending on nothing, even though engaged in action, he or she does not really do anything.’

Tyaktvā karmaphalāsaṅgam, ‘by renouncing attachment to the fruits of action’; *karma, phala, āsaṅga: āsaṅga* is attachment, *phala* is fruit, and *karma* is action. *Nityatṛpto,* ‘mind remaining fully satisfied constantly’. *Nirāśrayaḥ,* ‘absolutely free’, no dependence on anything; *āśraya* means dependence. *Karmaṇi abhiprvṛtto api*, ‘even though he or she is engaged in

action'; *abhi* means constantly, day after day, from morning till evening; *pravṛtto api,* 'though engaged in action'. *Naiva kiñcit karoti saḥ,* 'he or she doesn't do anything at all'. That person is enjoying it almost like on a holiday. Heavy work, yet enjoying a holiday. *Holiday in work*. That is a great idea. A bit of it we have to realize in our life. The highest level of it we can reach only when we realize the infinite Self. But a little bit of it is good for all of us in every field of life. The other person, without the trained mind, full of fussy ideas, jumping about, shouting all the time, making the whole world feel that he or she is doing a world-shaking work; actually that person is only expending one's own psychic energy. The result of work is very little. That is a big lesson our people must learn. Silent work is effective work. Noisy work is not effective work. Full of expenditure of emotional energy and shouting this and that; in Bengali we call it '*sarvanāś* attitude' of work; if anything goes wrong in the midst of work, you make a big show of it: *sarva nāś*, 'everything is destroyed'—like Cassandra in Greek mythology, 'we are all destroyed, we are all destroyed', going about in the battle of Troy, that is the story of Cassandra. So we have Cassandra type of people. They make small mistakes appear big. A spiritually trained mind will do much work with no noise, no fuss. Fussy work is really very inefficient work. We have to realize this truth. When you work in society, you can find some people shouting all the time as if they are doing some big work. They are only creating a nuisance. That is all. Calm, silent, steady work, no talking and shouting at all; that is what we must realize today.

I like to quote the words of our ex-President, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. In Delhi we have so many busy-look-bodies in social life. They want to organize something here, something there, always looking busy. That is all, they do very little work. They want only to achieve a little prominence to themselves, to be photographed with the Prime Minister! In that connection, Dr. Radhakrishnan said at that time, 'the modern men, and more especially the modern women, do not believe in religion or god. They believe in what they call going about doing good. But when you closely observe it, *it is more going about than doing good*.' Such people are there all over the world. More going about than doing good! More shouting, making their presence felt, such people are there in social life, institutions, political parties, everywhere.

In this context, these teachings are seen to be very high, the whole nation can be transformed into great workers, heroic workers.

I chanced to read in an advertisement in a Souvenir, a sentence from Swami Vivekananda. Then I referred to the original text in the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 7, p. 168. That is a reference to one of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, by name Swami Trigunatitananda. I am talking of the period 1899–1900. He was conducting the Bengali journal, *Udbodhan,* and also serving the Holy Mother; he had also to do the printing of the journal and even delivering it to the people, doing even the press work. Later, he worked as the head of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco for several years and died there. One day, a disciple came to Vivekananda and praised Trigunatitananda:

'A disciple: sir, it is impossible for any other man to labour for this magazine (*Udbodhan*) in the way Swami Trigunatita does.

'Swamiji: Do you think these Sannyasin children of Sri Ramakrishna are born simply to sit under trees lighting *dhuni*-fires? Whenever any of them will take up some work, people will be astonished to see their energy. Learn from them how to work.'

That is a great inspiring utterance, speaking about what this country will be in time to come. Today we are not so. We are very inefficient in our work, we spend more energy in talking than in working. But that will change. A new philosophy is coming. So, this exposition on *Karma-yoga* as well as this new teaching about seeing action in inaction and inaction in action, is going to be implemented this time. More heroic workers will come out of Indian society. Other countries do have good workers, though they need a certain philosophical and spiritual depth. But our country needs to learn how to work *well,* how to work *together,* how to produce tremendous results from the smallest of causes.

When I spoke in Delhi Municipal Corporation Public Meeting about *The Role of Local Self-government institutions in our Democracy* on request of the Corporation Commissioner saying that very few of his staff of 125,000 people were working, I had occasion to refer to this: why all these village pañcāyats and town municipalities are failing; because nobody

among the staff works, and the members only talk during municipal committee meetings; nobody cares to deal with the problems of the citizen. There is not that practical orientation. Our pañcāyats could have achieved much progress, but not by talking this or that, and getting a few selfish things accomplished; and the pañcāyat becomes ineffective. How can you run a public institution efficiently with this kind of attitude? Members must be humanly oriented, take out the problems in the agenda one by one—all dealing with human welfare: discuss how to achieve it? Here is a road needed, there is a water tap needed, here is a street light needed, a public toilet needed. Try to implement it, not by talking, but by getting things done; by discussion with each other. Finish the discussion and start doing the work. Instead of that, we go on lecturing. One Vice-Chancellor of a big university in India told me: 'We have ten or twelve agenda; after four hours of one Senate meeting, even half an agenda is not over! Everybody is lecturing all the time.' He told me this literally. So all this is national trait, which we developed during our thousand-year slave period. Now we are free. Why continue in this way? Our pañcāyats will become the most dynamic centres of national life when the members develop character, this capacity to work, and love for the nation. In one hour a pañcāyat can deal with many problems, and then go and execute them. This is how we have to change our whole attitude to work. Whatever we had till now, was quite alright for a slave people, not for a free people. Free people's ways are different; they have the capacity to work, to do teamwork. No great things can be done without teamwork. Ten people must put their heads and hands together; then only we can get things done.

So, I am hoping that with this orientation towards Pañcāyat Rāj, which is just now influencing the Indian thought atmosphere, combined with this character development that must come to our people, our nation can achieve great results in a short time. That is why these *Gītā* teachings are all meant to be applied, meant to be really verified in daily life and work. So, *karmaṇi abhipravṛtto api naiva kiñcit karoti saḥ,* 'even if well engaged in work, he or she is enjoying leisure.' What a joy it is to work for the people! That will solve problems one by one. Villages become bright, with good roads, street lighting, sanitation, health, and education; people have become co-operative, not going to court for litigation against each other, every now and

then, which is what they are indulging in now. What a change it will be! The whole country will become a heaven. This is the heaven we have to create in India, instead of waiting to get a ticket from a priest to that post-mortem heaven!, which is all what we understood by much of religion in India till now. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will summon the whole of humanity in India and elsewhere in the eleventh chapter (*śloka* 33) to this great work:

Tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva;
Jitvā śatrūn bhuṅkṣva rājyam samṛddham —

'Therefore, Arjuna, stand up and enjoy the prosperity of the nation after overcoming your enemies!'

Addressing the whole nation, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'stand up, all of you'. *Uttiṣṭha, yaśo labhasva,* 'achieve the glory that belongs to human beings'. Only when you solve your problems, you get your glory; otherwise, you have no glory at all. How?, *jitvā śatrūn,* 'overcoming your enemies': laziness, human unconcern, poverty, insanitation, backwardness, illiteracy, all these are your enemies. Overcome them! Arjuna had a war in front, but our people have this kind of war! And then, *bhuṅkṣva rājyam samṛddham,* 'enjoy life in this prosperous well-developed country'. Then only can you understand the meaning of true physical science and true science of religion. This message we shall come across in the eleventh chapter after Śrī Kṛṣṇa showed his *visva rūpa* or universal form to Arjuna.

These are great ideas. If only these ideas inspire the upper and middle classes and also percolate to the people in the rural areas, what a revolutionary change will come! After all, the human being is teachable. New ideas can change the character of the human beings from bad to good. Our people need new ideas. They live on old, feudal, inherited ideas. First of all, they have lost all faith in themselves. 'What can we do? We are ordinary people.' Who is ordinary? Everybody is ordinary or extraordinary, as he or she thinks of oneself. That is what Vedanta teaches and our people must learn. Have faith in yourself. You can do wonders. This, our people must learn, slowly, steadily, if the nation is to progress. Every word in this *Gītā* is meant to make people better and better, civilization richer and purer, whether it is East or West. And so, Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues in the same strain:

निराशीर्यतचित्तात्मा त्यक्तसर्वपरिग्रहः।
शारीरं केवलं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम्॥२१॥

Nirāśīḥ yatacittātmā tyaktasarvaparigrahaḥ;
Śārīram kevalam karma kurvannāpnoti kilbiṣam— 4. 21

'Without too many ambitions, the body and mind controlled, and all personal possessiveness relinquished, he or she does not suffer any evil consequences, by doing mere bodily action.'

Nirāśīḥ, 'without too much expectations', 'I want this, I want that', the mind building up castles all the time; with that attitude removed, the mind is more steady; *yatacittātmā,* 'the one with a well-disciplined mind', *tyakta sarva parigrahaḥ,* 'with the idea of possessing this and that gone from the mind'. Today, there is too much of this idea of possession, that is why there is so much of theft in the form of corrupt practices and robbery. Self-respect is so little. So, *tyaktasarvaparigrahaḥ,* 'having given up the attitude of "I must have this, I must have that"'. It is not literally giving up one's things but only that 'sense of possessing it', that pride that comes out of that sense of possession. *Śārīram kevalam karma kurvan,* 'even though he or she does work with the body'; *na āpnoti kilbiṣam,* 'he or she doesn't incur any evil'. Then comes the state of a still higher spiritual achievement.

यदृच्छालाभसन्तुष्टो द्वन्द्वातीतो विमत्सरः।
समः सिद्धावसिद्धौ च कृत्वाऽपि न निबध्यते॥२२॥

Yadṛcchā lābha santuṣṭo dvandvātīto vimatsaraḥ;
Samaḥ siddhāvasiddhau ca kṛtvāpi na nibadhyate—4. 22

'Personally content with what comes without effort, unaffected by the pairs of opposites, free from envy, even-minded in success and failure, though acting, he or she is not bound.'

Yadṛcchālābhasantuṣṭo, 'personally satisfied with what comes by chance', never running after a thing. This is a very high level of spiritual development. We can't do it in the beginning, but we can keep it in view. That stage is there. A young boy or girl of 18 or 20, cannot understand, need not worry about this teaching. There is a possibility in every one to

come to that state. I may not have it now. But, I shall keep it in view. That is all what we have to do at this stage. *Yadṛcchā,* 'by chance'; *lābha,* 'achievement of profit or gain'; *santuṣṭo,* 'being pleased with it'. I never ran after it, it came to me—that situation. I have seen people who do not strive for promotion in their office. What is due to me will come to me, that is their attitude. Such people are very few in number; and they have got also what is their due, though things are not so good in our society now. In a just society, one will get what is one's due. But today our society is not just. It is very very unjust; even by struggling you are not going to get your due. I shall do my work well, what is due to me will come. This is a high spiritual attitude. When you are in a very unjust society, there will be no peace. Constant tension will be there. But this unjust society *we* have created. *We* have to change it; it is our national responsibility. Nobody else is going to change this society. How to make it more just? That is the great work in India. In our society today, law and justice do not often go together. Law goes one way, justice goes another way. That society is the healthiest, where law and justice go together. What a beautiful idea! If there is detachment in the law-enforcing agencies, then that will become true. If there is no detachment, if there is worldliness, selfishness, then everything will be unjust. Nobody will be happy in that society. We are passing through a very hard creative period, where so much of evil is there; some good is also there. Increase the good, reduce the evil. You and I have to do it. That kind of commitment to the social good must come out from millions of our people.

There is a *śloka* from Bhartṛhari's *Nītiśataka,* which Swami Vivekananda loved to quote:

Nindantu nītinipuṇāḥ yadi vā stuvantu
lakṣmī samāviśatu gacchatu vā yatheṣṭam;
Adyaiva vā maraṇamastu yugāntare vā
nyāyyāt pathāt pravicalanti padam na dhīrāḥ —

He asks, what is the quality of a *dhīra? Dhira* means an intelligent and heroic type of mind. That is why *dhīra* is a great word in Sanskrit. What is the nature of that *dhīra? Nindantu nītinipuṇāḥ yadi vā stuvantu,* 'let law experts praise or let them blame'; *lakṣmī samāviśatu gacchatu vā*

yatheṣṭam, ‘let Fortune come now or go wherever She likes’; *Adyaiva vā maraṇamastu yugāntare vā,* ‘let death come now, or let it come many years later’; *nyāyyāt pathāt pravicalanti padam na dhīrāḥ,* ‘the *dhīra* will not move one inch from the path of *nyāya,* rectitude, justice’. That type of mind must increase in society. *Dhīra* means that. What a wonderful change it will make! Nothing can shake the mind from the path of righteousness, from the path of justice.

And so, *dvandvātīto,* ‘free from these dualities, of good and bad, happiness and misery’; these are called *dvandvas;* they always go together. If you have one, you will have the other also. *Vimatsaraḥ,* ‘free from all hatred’, all kinds of violent thinking; *sama siddhāvasiddhau ca,* ‘calm in *siddhi* and in *asiddhi,* in success and in failure’; *kṛtvāpi na nibadhyate,* ‘even though acting, he or she is not bound at all’. This is a very high state of human development. Then comes one of the greatest verses of the chapter, verse 23.

गतसङ्गस्य मुक्तस्य ज्ञानावस्थितचेतसः।
यज्ञायाचरतः कर्म समग्रं प्रविलीयते॥२३॥

Gatasaṅgasya muktasya jñānāvasthita cetasaḥ;
Yajñāyācarataḥ karma samagram pravilīyate — 4. 23

‘Devoid of attachment, liberated, with mind centred in spiritual knowledge, performing work for *yajña* alone, his or her entire *karma* dissolves away.’

Gatasaṅgasya, ‘whose *saṅga* or attachment, is *gata,* gone’. The spirit of attachment has vanished. Therefore, *muktasya,* ‘he or she is free’. It is freedom here and now in the midst of work. *Jñānāvasthita cetasaḥ*, ‘whose *manas,* or *cetas,* or *buddhi* is established in spiritual *jñāna*’. What a beautiful conception!—the mind established in *jñāna.* Then, *yajñāyācarataḥ karma*, ‘whatever *karma* is done, is done in a spirit of *yajña,* in a spirit of sacrifice, in a spirit of dedication’. *Samagram pravilīyate,* ‘becomes completely dissolved’. It is not that one should achieve the whole of it or nothing of it; no, but one should try to get even a bit of it. *Pravilīyate,* ‘become dissolved’, *samagram,* ‘completely’. There is

no *karma* at all; and yet that person has been doing *karma* all the time. This is verse 23. And the next verse, verse 24, is very well known, especially in the Ramakrishna Mission circle, all over the world. Before taking food we recite this *śloka*.

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविर्ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम्।
ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना॥२४॥

Brahmārpaṇam brahma haviḥ brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam;
Brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahma karma samādhinā—4. 24

'The offering process is Brahman, the offered clarified butter is Brahman, offered by Brahman, in the fire of Brahman; by that, Brahman alone is to be reached by one who is in the *samādhi* of Brahma-action.'

Wonderful *śloka*. *Brahma arpaṇam,* the process of offering is Brahman; then *brahma haviḥ*, this *havis,* ghee and other things that you offer into the fire, is called *havis;* 'that *havis* is also Brahman'. *Brahmāgnau,* 'in the fire in which you offer'; that is also Brahman'; *brahmaṇā hutam,* 'the one who offers is also Brahman'. And then, *brahmaiva tena gantavyam,* 'Brahman alone is the goal of the one who offers'. As a result of this sacrifice, what does one achieve? *Brahmaiva tena gantavyam,* 'one achieves Brahman only through this'. By whom?, *brahma karma samādhinā,* 'whose *samādhi* is *brahmakarma* action as Brahman'. Such a person knows that whatever he or she does is nothing but the divine. This is a profound Vedantic truth that there is only Brahman in this universe, infinite non-dual pure Consciousness. That has manifested as this universe; objects, actions, subjects, everything is only one infinite Brahman; that is the Truth that is expressed through this verse. This wonderful Truth is given in physiology and other modern scientific thought, and, as I have expressed earlier in dealing with verse 2, the writer of the article *The Sun is the Great Mother* in the *National Geographic Magazine* says, we eat the sun in our food and its digestion, we wear the sun in our cloth, we use sun in our coal and oil and so on, and ending with the sentence: 'Particularly interwoven are the threads of life and light.'

That universal oneness behind this multiplicity is what our ancients in India, from the *Ìg-Veda* onwards, understood and expressed. This sun is also called the *pūṣan,* 'one who nourishes'. The sun is a physical visible entity. But our sages discovered the spiritual consciousness of Brahman behind the sun, behind the starry system, behind everything. That is Brahman, the ultimate reality, infinite pure Consciousness, one and non-dual. That is the truth behind this universe. That is affirmed during meal time. A beautiful idea: the *jaṭharāgni* or digestive juice inside my stomach and intestines, which digests the food, is also a form of the divine. That the *Gītā* will say some chapters later (15. 14): 'I exist in the stomach of all beings as the fire of digestion, *jaṭharāgni.* I digest all food that is put into the digestive system.' One and non-dual, the whole universe is the expression of that Brahman. Just as in the solar system, everything is solar radiation in condensed form as water, as ice, as stone, as plant, as this or that. Everything is solar radiation. So, this is a great *śloka*:

Brahmārpaṇam brahma havirbrahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam;
Brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahmakarmasamādhinā —

That is a Truth, not a dogma.

How can this and that be the same?, one may ask. How can the food I take, and the digestive energy in the stomach be the same? Yes, they are! Go to the root, you find that it is from one source that all these have come. Take the human body. The same genetic material has become the hard bone structure, and the same genetic material has become the beautiful visibility through the eye. It is translucent as it were. Some are hard, some soft, some fluid, some as the skin and nail and hair. All these have come from the same genetic material. So, this is the truth that we are taught again and again in physical science. Everything within the body is built up, then repaired, corrected, and made to grow by the same genetic material that is inside. This is a big truth, the Advaita truth, which India discovered ages ago regarding the universe also as a whole. We called it Atman or Brahman, the infinite Consciousness, the one without a second, says the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (II. i. 20) given earlier.

दैवमेवापरे यज्ञं योगिनः पर्युपासते।
ब्रह्माग्नावपरे यज्ञं यज्ञेनैवोपजुह्वति॥२५॥

Daivamevāpare yajñam yoginaḥ paryupāsate;
Brahmāgnāvapare yajñam yajñenaiva upajuhvati —4. 25

'Some *yogis* perform sacrifices to *devas* alone, while others offer Brahman as the self, as sacrifice in the fire of Brahman alone.'

Now, several types of *yajñas* are being referred to here. We have studied the subject of *yajña* in the third chapter, *śloka* 9. Here again it is taken and put in a different way. Some *yogis* perform sacrifices to gods, *devas,* the bright ones. Others offer the self as sacrifice by the self in the fire of Brahman as the Self of all. That is high spiritual sacrifice. This little ego is put into the fire of knowledge of Brahman; it is burnt away. Only Brahman remains; that is another type of sacrifice. One is externally oriented, the other is spiritual and inward, which is high-class, resulting in high character and high spiritual awareness and a spirit of service. Similarly,

श्रोत्रादीनीन्द्रियाण्यन्ये संयमाग्निषु जुह्वति।
शब्दादीन्विषयानन्य इन्द्रियाग्निषु जुह्वति॥२६॥

Śrotrādīnīndriyāṇyanye samyamāgniṣu juhvati;
Śabdādīn viṣayān anya indriyāgniṣu juhvati — 4. 26

'Some again offer hearing and other senses as sacrifice in the fire of self-control, while others offer sound and other sense objects as sacrifice in the fire of the sense organs.'

Very practical ideas. Everyday you are doing a lot of sacrifice within the body. And one such is mentioned here. Some again offer this wonderful act of hearing, and other senses, as sacrifice in the fire of self-control. You control the sensory system. What do you do thereby? You light a fire. That is called *ātma-samyama-yogāgni,* 'the fire of self-control'. You put all the senses into that. You burn them. You find, after that, nothing but pure mind guiding the senses. So, this is also sacrifice. Every development of character is a result of some such sacrifice. That you must remember. Everyday we are doing it, some less, some more; without that there cannot

be a human society. Only we don't know that we are doing it as a sacrifice. Similarly, others offer all the other organs of sense. Where do they offer these?, to the fire of the *yoga* of self-control. Suppose you hear something. Sound is being offered to the organ of hearing. In any higher life, it has to be offered to the *yoga* of self-control which is like a fire. It is actually a sacrifice. In this way, in the process of character development, when the sensory system is dealing with the sensory objects, you are already performing various sacrifices. We sacrifice the food into the fire in the stomach, and that becomes our energy of movement, of strength, our physical stamina. So, sacrifice is going on all the time. Only we must know that this is the way that it is being done. Then you will find much more ability to handle the forces working within the human body. Similarly,

सर्वाणीन्द्रियकर्माणि प्राणकर्माणि चापरे।
आत्मसंयमयोगाग्नौ जुह्वति ज्ञानदीपिते॥२७॥

Sarvāṇīndriyakarmāṇi prāṇakarmāṇi cāpare;
ātmasamyamayogāgnau juhvati jñānadīpite — 4. 27

'Some again offer all the actions of sense organs and the functions of *prāṇā,* the vital energy, in the *yoga* fire of self-control, kindled by spiritual knowledge.'

In this verse, verse 27, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'some people again offer all the actions of the sense organs and the functions of the vital energy, namely, the *prāṇa,* into the fire of self-control as a sacrifice. We are asked to discipline the whole internal system thoroughly. How do we do that? Lighting the fire of self-control, put all of them into that. That is called this inner sacrifice. These are all symbolic ideas. And, *jñānadīpite,* it is kindled by knowledge. We are doing it knowingly, deliberately. No animal can do it. Automatically you can never do it. You have to do it deliberately. That is why we are asked to light up the fire of knowledge first and then sacrifice everything there. High character comes out of that action. So, you need not do sacrifices only outside. Our people are so fond of such rituals outside, but the *Gītā* advises all people to convert them into this inner sacrifice which will help them to manifest the ever-present divine within.

There are two levels in *pūja,* ritualistic worship, in the path of *bhakti;* One is 'mental worship', *mānasa pūja,* the other is called *bāhya pūja,* external worship. So, when one sits in front of an image and starts worship, first he or she will close the eyes and do worship within. Place the Lord in your heart, offer water to wash his feet, and bathe him; then offer food, and other items. And there you will find one very interesting *mantra* or holy utterance; we want to entertain the Lord in our heart. How do we entertain Him? We consider the restlessness of the mind and the senses as our dancing before the Lord to entertain the Lord. Imagine, therefore, even though we do not like our restless mind to continue, we are now giving it a higher turn. 'This restless mind is conceived as giving entertainment to the divine within', *nṛtyam indriyakarmāṇi cāñcalyam manasaḥ tathā,* that is the *mantra. Indriyakarmāṇi,* 'activities of the sense organs', *cāñcalyam* 'restlessness'; *manasaḥ tathā,* 'similarly, of the mind'. Now, what can be a sacrifice greater than this?, everything going on within the body is given a spiritual direction! Then we open our eyes, bring out the Lord from the heart, place him in front on a flower pedestal, and do the external *pūja.* First is internal *pūja,* second is external *pūja.*

So, here in this *śloka*, *Sarvāṇīndriyakarmāṇi prāṇakarmāṇi cāpare; ātmasamyamayogāgnau juhvati; yogāgni,* is the fire of *yoga;* what kind of *yoga?, ātmasamyama,* perfect self-control. The *yoga* of perfect self-control is compared to a fire. Into that fire you are offering all these things. That is beautiful worship, a better ritual than merely the external ritual that we perform. The external ritual must be reinforced by this internal ritual. That does not happen in the case of most of our religious people. They do plenty of external ritual; internally, no ritual at all. No kind of sacrifice there. No lighting of fire of *yoga* within. The result is we remain what we were; if we were wicked, petty-minded, quarrelling, litigating, and with a showy devotion to God also, we remain the same. That should not be. So, the *Gītā* is giving you very many alternatives of *yajña,* by which the whole life becomes a *yajña.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say later on in 4. 33 that *Jñāna-yajña,* the *yajña* of knowledge, is the highest.

Professor F. Capra in his *Tao of Physics* says that the *background material* of the cosmos given by modern astrophysics is less pervasive a concept compared to *Brahman* of the Upaniṣads. Brahman includes all

physical and non-physical realities in this world. That is the Brahman which is referred to here. Everything is a manifestation of Brahman. Having said that, the succeeding verses also referred to several types of *yajñas,* sacrifices. The earlier Vedic teachings contain many types of sacrifices. But, as I have said earlier, the *Gītā* took up this word *yajña,* gave it an ethical and spiritual content and direction. That we have seen in the third chapter also. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa is referring to various types of *yajñas* that we do in our everyday life. Every movement of life is a part of *yajña.* That is how *yajña* has been transformed here. And then, finally Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say that none of these sacrifices can compare with that one type of *yajña* known as *jñāna-yajña, yajña* of spiritual knowledge. That is the greatest *yajña.* Those who control the sense organs, they are also performing *yajña.* They light the fire of self-control. Into that fire they put the sensory stimuli and they are burnt away and transformed. In this way, all inner discipline and outer behaviour are a type of *yajña.* I have a tendency to steal; I control that tendency; how?, I light a little fire of knowledge in me, put that tendency inside it and burn it away. In this way, a pervasive meaning is given to this concept of *yajña.* Fire is essential for *yajña.* That fire is of different types.

Two types of fire we have to reckon with. One, we all know, is the digestive fire in the body, *jaṭharāgni,* the acid and various secretions, which digest the food and assimilate it; by the essence of the food taken, the body is nourished, and the waste matter is thrown away. A big *yajña* like this is going on in the body every day. It is good to have a good *jaṭharāgni.* But, so far as the human being is concerned, that is not enough. So, our teachers said, another fire must be there within the system. That is called *jñānāgni,* 'the fire of knowledge'. No animal can develop the fire of knowledge. Fire of digestion, they have. Fire of knowledge, only humans can have. So, from childhood onwards, we are asked to develop the fire of knowledge, so that experiences come to us, some of them unpleasant, we must be able to digest them. That digestion is done in the fire of knowledge, *jñānāgni.* As I referred to earlier, this is like the oil refinery which refines crude oil and produces beautiful and useful petroleum products. This is how character is formed. This is how we develop compassion, dedication, a spirit of service, and largeness of mind and heart. All this is *yajña.* The character building work itself is *yajña.* We have to put more stress on that hereafter.

When I was speaking in the Universities in the United States, I used to tell the young people there that youth have plenty of digestion, they can digest, what they call in America, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Hamburger! These are common things there. Very strong digestion is needed. Well, that is beautiful. But, remember, you must develop the other fire also, the fire of knowledge, to digest difficult experiences, so that no trauma will come to you. When a wrong experience can create a trauma, a psychic distortion, that should not come. That will not come if you have lit up this fire of spiritual knowledge, *jñānāgni.* Try to build up that *jñānāgni* from childhood onwards.

In this connection, I wish to refer to one or two events during my 1968–69 cultural lecture tour of north and south America from 18 July 1968 to 31 December 1969. One event I have already referred to in the earlier part of this book. That refers to my Portland Radio talk in 1969 which, originally scheduled for twenty minutes, continued for full two hours, from 10 pm. to midnight, including also answering questions conveyed by phone by the listeners.

This book is entitled *Universal Message of the BhagavadGītā.* It contains the practical expression of Vedanta as a science of human possibilities which is a continuation of the science of physical nature's possibilities developed highly by the modern West, especially in U.S.A., as modern science. During this tour, I found reconfirmed the universality of the message of Vedanta. That tour consisted of 934 lectures and question-answer sessions, of which 90 were television, radio and newspaper interviews, 30 were in churches and temples, 141 were in Vedanta Societies and Ramakrishna Ashramas, 156 were in private parlours, 197 were in public forums, and 320 were in 115 universities and colleges—as reported by the publisher of my book *A Pilgrim Looks at the World,* vol. 2, opening page. Every one hour extempore lecture was followed by a stimulating one-hour question-answer session. 'Please come again' was the remark by the audience on many occasions.

On 19 February 1969 was my announced lecture at the Harvard University. I arrived at the University with Swami Sarvagatananda of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Boston at 8:10 pm. On arrival at the

University, the hall meant for the lecture was found overcrowded; the audience moved, through about 200 yards of rain and snow, to a larger hall in another block, on the announcement of a change of venue by the organizers. I spoke, standing, for an hour on the subject of *Self-Knowledge and Human Fulfilment,* chosen by the organizers from a list supplied to them by the Boston Ramakrishna Vedanta Society. Then came a one-hour question-answer session for which I sat on the table, cross-legged, to be able to see the faces of the listeners.

One particular question evoked a mild reprimand from me when I found that, when the chairs in the hall became insufficient for the incoming audience, the old professor would go and bring the chair from the next room; I found no student getting up to do that service. So, while answering that particular question, I said: 'I mark something atrocious. Why does not some student get up and help the professor? Is it not worthwhile to make service an essential part of education? But it is not your fault. Only, your parents and teachers never asked you to do this and that in the fear of any trauma developing in you. That makes the youth fail to develop their individuality into personality. Biologist Sir Julian Huxley defines persons as "individuals who transcend their organic individuality in conscious social participation." I also said that I marked this in other universities also in U.S.A. The audience consisting of students, some professors, and some citizens, accepted this remark without any resentment. My second lecture at the Harvard University was some 14 years later, on the subject of *Vivekananda and Human Excellence,* which has been published as a booklet by the Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 700014.

I have referred earlier, in the introduction to this book, to the remark of Silvano Ariety, in the book, *The Handbook of American Psychiatry,* vol. 3, by several writers, about the deterioration of creativity in American youth and how to remedy it.

As a boy of 12 years, I had an experience, narrated earlier in this book, which is relevant to refer to in this context. While going to school, I threw a stone at a youth, not expecting that it would go that far; but it did hurt him. His parents complained to my mother; she was naturally upset. When I returned from the school in the evening, I found my mother sullen and

grave. ‘You have to receive ten canings’, she said. I said, ‘Yes, I shall, for I have harmed that youth.’ Then the elder brother, in mother’s presence, gave me ten canings on my palms. I received it and came and sat peacefully by my mother’s side and soon forgot all about it. No trauma!

I have found American people, and youth in particular, both boys and girls, open-minded and intensely human, unless controlled by any church group.

The American Reporter, published by the U.S. Embassy, New Delhi, reported in its 26 February 1969 issue, which appears in the Appendix-D of *A Pilgrim Looks at the World,* vol. 2. p. 737, about this despatch, entitled *Vedantic Leader Impressed by U.S. Response:*

‘His impact on American audience is evident in this comment by Ann Curtis, a student of Carleton College in Minnesota:

“On the one hand, his incredibly vast knowledge not only fascinated me but thrilled and excited me intellectually. On the other hand, his words reached a depth within me which literally caused me to tingle inside with the realization that each of us, there, was *really* alive and *really* dynamic.”

‘David Milofsky, Chairman of the Wisconsin Union Literary Committee of the University of Wisconsin, said:

“Your visit helped to broaden our horizons and to see that, although we are separated by great distances physically, there is a universal spiritual kinship between all peoples. I feel that the distances between India and the United States and between Vedanta and Western thought were decreased because of your lecture.”’

In India, various practises were developed by way of religious training; some of them left to themselves, being very, very sterile; nothing good will come out of them. For example, people do plenty of *prāṇāyāma.* Here also Śrī Kṛṣṇa will make a passing reference to it later. We can do *prāṇāyāma.* The air is taken in through the nose, and it is held within the body for some time, and then it is thrown out. These are three steps known as *pūraka, kumbhaka,* and *recaka.* But, without the *jñāna* touch, these become merely mechanical. They do not develop high character. During the year 1939, some persons brought to me a person who was an employee in Pune

Meteorological office. They told me that everyday this person does *prāṇāyāma.* Also, regularly, and everyday he beats his wife! And his friends told him, stop this *prāṇāyāma.* But, he said, no, I can't stop *prāṇāyāma.* That is essential. So, they all came to me. And I said, what is the use of this *prāṇāyāma,* if you can't love your wife, you can't treat her with respect? It is a mere mechanical action; stop it and develop love. But he said, 'I can't give up *prāṇāyāma.' Prāṇāyāma* had got hold of him. That is one type of people. So, you can see in all these matters, that mere physical activity, mere ritual activity, without the *jñāna* behind it, has absolutely no value for human development, for character development. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to tell us that after detailing the various types of *yajñas* that are there.

Sarvāṇīndriyakarmāṇi prāṇakarmāṇi cāpare. 'All the *indriya* activities, all the *prāṇa* activities, all these you can throw into the fire of *ātma-samyama*', self-control, self-discipline; take all these energies and put them into that fire, then they become high character. *ātma-samyama,* inner discipline, is compared to a fire. What a beautiful idea! But, *juhvati jñānadīpite,* 'that fire is to be lit up by the fire of *jñāna*'; then only it is worthwhile. Mere dry ascetic practice has no meaning. What is the use of being a dry ascetic? What does one gain thereby? But, if there is *jñāna* along with that asceticism, then it is wonderful; then there will not be need for too much asceticism also. So this emphasis is on *jñāna;* here it is *jñāna,* elsewhere it will be *bhakti,* and pure *bhakti* and pure *jñāna* are one and the same, says Sri Ramakrishna. So many times you will find the word *jñāna* is used, and so many times you will find the word *bhakti* is used. 'Love of God', 'Knowledge of God'—both have the power to transform human character. Therefore, without either love or knowledge, mere physical practice has absolutely no meaning; they are sterile. They don't produce any good at all. Often they produce vanity, pride, arrogance. Then comes several types of *yajñas* put together in one verse:

द्रव्ययज्ञास्तपोयज्ञा योगयज्ञास्तथाऽपरे।
स्वाध्यायज्ञानयज्ञाश्च यतयः संशितव्रताः॥२८॥

Dravyayajñāḥ tapoyajñā yogayajñāḥ tathā'pare;

Svādhyāya-jñānayajñāśca yatayaḥ samśitavratāḥ —4. 28

'Others again offer material things, austerity, and *yoga,* as sacrifice, while still others, endowed with self-restraint and rigid vows, offer study of the scriptures and knowledge, as sacrifice.'

Yati means one who works hard; who struggles, they are called *yatayaḥ,* those who are interested in working hard to achieve their goal. What kind of *yajñas* do they do? *Dravya-yajña:* take ghee, pour into fire. That is *dravyayajña.* A material entity is called *dravya.* Very often people end up with only *dravyayajña;* but that is only the beginning. *Tapo-yajña,* certain types of 'ascetic practices', self-control, self-discipline, all this is part of this practice. *Yoga-yajña,* 'practising *yoga',* either *prāṇāyāma* or this type of *karma-yoga. Svādhyāya,* 'the *yajña* of self-study'. It is a wonderful *yajña.* How much knowledge we gain by study, and, through that knowledge we develop strength and a measure of fearlessness. Knowledge is strength. In this chapter, there are several verses coming hereafter in praise of knowledge. 'Knowledge is a supreme wealth; develop it,' Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to tell us. After finishing our university education, we should not give up study. Study and search for knowledge must continue. As long as we live, so long should we continue to study. Sri Ramakrishna has said this in Bengali: '*yāvat bāmchi, tāvat śīkhi.*' Study, try to understand what you study, try to apply it, all that is *svādhyāya jñānayajñāśca. Yatayaḥ samśitavratāḥ,* 'those who are well disciplined', whose minds are very sharp, *samśita* means sharp, they practise all these types of *yajñas.* But the first one is *dravyayajña,* sacrifice of material things into fire. Anybody can do that. Sometimes, you don't do it yourself, you appoint a priest, pay him ten rupees, he will do it for you. That is called *dravyayajña.* But, real *yajña* comes in only when *jñāna* comes in. When you develop understanding, develop a little illumination, and its reflection on character, a better person comes out of that. Then is given a few details of the *prāṇāyāma* which some people do:

अपाने जुह्वति प्राणं प्राणेऽपानं तथाऽपरे।
प्राणापानगती रुद्ध्वा प्राणायामपरायणा:॥२९॥

Apāne juhvati prāṇam prāṇe'pānam tathā'pare;

Prāṇāpānagatī ruddhvā prāṇāyāmaparāyaṇāḥ — 4. 29

‘Some offer, as sacrifice, the outgoing into the incoming breath, and some others offer the incoming into the outgoing; stopping the courses of the incoming and outgoing breaths, constantly practising the regulation of *prāṇa,* the vital energy.’

Those who are experts in *prāṇāyāma,* they offer as sacrifice *prāṇa* in *apāna, apāna* in *prāṇa.* When you close one of your nostrils and take in air that is called *pūraka,* filling in the lungs. The breath is held within for some time. That is called *kumbhaka.* Then finally throwing out the air through the other nostril; that is *recaka.* So, some people do like this, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *Prāṇāpānagatī ruddhvā*, ‘by controlling the movement of *prāṇa* and *apāna*’; *prāṇāyāmaparāyaṇāḥ*, ‘they who know the subject of *prāṇāyāma*’.

अपरे नियताहारा: प्राणान्प्राणेषु जुह्वति।
सर्वेऽप्येते यज्ञविदो यज्ञक्षपितकल्मषा:॥३०॥

Apare niyatāhārāḥ prāṇānprāṇeṣu juhvati ;
Sarve’pyete yajñavido yajñakṣapitakalmaṣāḥ — 4. 30

यज्ञशिष्टामृतभुजो यान्ति ब्रह्म सनातनम्।
नायं लोकोऽस्त्ययज्ञस्य कुतोऽन्य: कुरुसत्तम॥३१॥

Yajñaśiṣṭāmṛtabhujo yānti brahma sanātanam;
Nāyam loko’styayajñasya kuto’nyaḥ kurusattama —4. 31

‘Others, with disciplined dieting, sacrifice *prāṇas* into *prāṇas.* All of these are knowers of *yajña,* having their sins consumed by *yajña.* Those who eat the remnant of *yajña,* go to the Eternal Brahman. (Even) this world is not for the non-performer of *yajña,* how then another, O best of the Kurus?’

Apare, ‘others’; *niyatāhārāḥ,* ‘with disciplined dieting’, *prāṇān prāṇeṣu juhvati,* ‘offer *prāṇas* into *prāṇas.*’ All these people are knowers of *yajña.* So what a wide meaning the word *yajña* has got now. In the early Vedic period, *yajña* merely meant lighting a fire, pouring some ghee or some other kinds of grains into that fire. But in the *Gītā*, it has got such a wide

meaning. All aspects of life, in fact as I said, even the food that you take, those who are really spiritually inclined, they treat it as offering *yajña* into the fire of Brahman that is in your stomach. That is also *yajña;* eating is not for mere sense satisfaction, you get life energy.

In the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 'enquiry into the nature of Brahman' begins with the statement: *Annam brahmeti vyajānāt*. '(The disciple) understood *annam,* i.e., food, as Brahman.' When you put food in the stomach, out of that food comes energy for you. All your energy comes from there. If you don't have it, you won't get that energy at all. Then the Upaniṣad continues to say that *prāṇa, manas*, *vijñāna,* etc., were taken to be Brahman. Ultimately, the true Brahman, of the nature of infinite, non-dual, pure Consciousness, was realized as the true Brahman. These others are all the same Brahman at various levels of experience. That is how the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* discusses this subject. *Sarve'pyete yajñavido*, 'all of these examples are all knowers of *yajña*'. *Yajñakṣapitakalmaṣāḥ,* 'through those *yajñas* they overcome the evils that are in their mind and heart'. *Yajñaśiṣṭāmṛtabhujo,* 'eating the nectar of the remnant of *yajña*', what was later called *prasāda,* what remains after the *yajña,* that is holy. The idea is: self-centredness means you are only living on poison. That should not be. So, *yānti brahma sanātanam*, 'such people reach the eternal Brahman', evolving slowly. In spiritual life, people slowly achieve the eternal Brahman in this very life. *Yajña* is the means, and that *yajña* is *jñānadīpite*, 'lit up by the fire of *jñāna*, spiritual knowledge'. With that attitude, whatever we do, becomes spiritually beneficial. You serve a guest, you show him or her great regard, you do it with the light of knowledge in you. That is called 'guest service'. They call such a guest, an *atithi,* 'one who comes uninvited on any day.' India has done this service in plenty throughout history. In no other country are guests looked after with so much care as in this country.

In fact, I got this certificate for India from an American professor. When I was in the States, and we were having dinner in the University, he said, 'I was Fulbright Scholar teaching in Meerut University, I and my wife.' 'And three months we were there. Not a single day we were allowed to eat in our own house. Everyday somebody or the other will invite, "please come to my house, please come to my house." I have never seen it anywhere in this

world. I saw it only in India.' I said you are right. Our people have practised fully this idea of service of the guest. A person can travel the whole of India without a pie in the pocket. Everywhere he will be looked after. Those who go to faraway Benares, or to Kedar-Badri and other great pilgrim centres, used to be cared for in each place by householders at their homes. That is something extraordinary. So, that teaching of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*: 'let your guest be your god', is a beautiful teaching Indians have practised.

So, this concept of *yajña* is being expounded here in the wider sense of the term: that whatever we do, do it in a spirit of *yajña.* A teacher is teaching a student; actually, he is doing a *yajña.* He is communicating knowledge into a mind which is ready to receive that knowledge. So, in all these matters, the concept of *yajña* has become universal in significance, through the touch of the *Gītā*. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa says therefore, *sarve'pyete yajñavido*, 'all these people are knowers of *yajña*'. The whole life is *yajña,* 'giving'; what a beautiful idea! The work that one does in politics is really *yajña.* It has now lost all its *yajña* character, because search for power is the only thing you find in politics. Spirit of service, how to educate the people in their own political rights, that has almost gone away. Politics is meant to give to millions of people the education that you are citizens of this great democracy, this whole government is meant for you; it depends upon you, derives strength from you. To raise the people's dignity is the purpose of a democratic polity. We rarely do it in India. We search only for our own power, either individual or party. So, you can see, when *yajña* is taken away from any field of life, it becomes very very ordinary, or less than ordinary. It becomes harmful to the human system. But, introduce a bit of *yajña,* everything becomes bright. Administration is *yajña,* politics is *yajña,* education is *yajña.* That is how Śrī Kṛṣṇa is using that word, in the widest sense. *Yānti brahma sanātanam*, such people 'attain the eternal Brahman', by slowly evolving their spiritual strength, their spiritual qualities, etc. 'Those who do not adopt this *yajña* attitude cannot win (even this manifested world), then what to speak of the other (the spiritual world), O best of Kurus?'

एवं बहुविधा यज्ञा वितता ब्रह्मणो मुखे।
कर्मजान्विद्धि तान्सर्वानेवं ज्ञात्वा विमोक्ष्यसे॥३२॥

Evam bahuvidhā yajñā vitatā brahmaṇo mukhe;
Karmajān viddhi tān sarvān evam jñātvā vimokṣyase—4. 32

'Thus, various *yajñas,* like the above, are strewn in the storehouse of the Veda. Know them all to be born of action; and thus knowing, thou shalt be free.'

Many *yajñas* of this type lie scattered in the Vedas. But, *karmajān viddhi tān sarvān,* 'know them all as born of *karma*'. All *yajña* is a type of *karma; evam jñātvā vimokṣyase,* 'you will be free when you understand this truth': through all this *karma* you are developing this *jñāna* within you. Keep that concept constantly within you. Otherwise, mere physical activity or ritualistic activity doesn't help one at all. But, if as a result of all this activity, you light up the fire of knowledge, then you advance spiritually. And you become free in this very life. Even in the midst of the work that we do, the work is positively helpful to us when it is associated with this truth of *jñāna*. Then, in the next *śloka,* Śrī Kṛṣṇa finally speaks of the supremacy of *jñāna-yajña,* 'knowledge-sacrifice'.

श्रेयान्द्रव्यमयाद्यज्ञाज्ज्ञानयज्ञः परन्तप।
सर्वं कर्माखिलं पार्थ ज्ञाने परिसमाप्यते॥३३॥

Śreyān dravyamayāt yajñāt jñānayajñaḥ parantapa;
Sarvam karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate —4. 33

'Knowledge-sacrifice, O scorcher of foes, is superior to sacrifice (performed) with (material) objects; all action, in its entirety, O Pārtha, attains its consummation in knowledge.'

From this verse onwards, you are in the presence of a beautiful hymn of praise to *jñāna,* 'spiritual knowledge'. One of the wonderful passages you find here, like in English poetry, 'In Praise of Wisdom', 'In Praise of Knowledge'. *Parantapa,* 'O Arjuna; *jñānayajñaḥ, '*the sacrifice of knowledge'; *śreyān,* 'is better'; *dravyamayāt yajñāt,* 'than the sacrifice of material articles'. Those *yajñas* are inferior. This *yajña, jñāna-yajña,* is superior: this is what the first line says; then Śrī Kṛṣṇa concludes by saying, *sarvam karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate*, 'O Pārtha, (if you know the truth), all *karma* will eventually get dissolved into *jñāna*'. Everything

becomes *jñāna,* 'spiritual knowledge'. All actions done in the human body, if one knows how to handle them, will reach up to *jñāna* finally. Though you begin with action, you reach up high to *jñāna* finally. That is a very important verse in this section. Therefore, if that is true, do search for knowledge. That is the next *śloka.*

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः॥३४॥

Tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā;
Upadekṣyanti te jñānam jñāninaḥ tattvadarśinaḥ —4. 34

'Know That (supreme Brahman), by prostrating yourself, by repeated questioning, and by service; the *jñānis*, those who have realized the Truth, will instruct you in that knowledge.'

If that *jñāna* or spiritual knowledge and realization is the ideal, if all the actions are finally going to dissolve into that *jñāna*, and we are asked to develop that *jñāna*, how shall we develop it? Try to understand this truth of *jñāna* by going to a teacher, *tad viddhi,* 'know That'; *praṇipātena,* 'by saluting the teacher'; *praṇipāta* means *namaskār* or salutation; and, *paripraśnena* means 'by constant questioning of the teacher and one's own mind.' Questioning is needed for developing knowledge. It is not a dogma or a creed which dissolves away by questioning; only truth can stand questioning; and it encourages it. It is actual experience. So, knowledge of this type needs constant questioning, *paripraśna*, not mere *praśna* or questioning, but *paripraśna, constant* questioning: what is this?, why should it be so?, how to achieve it?, questioning like that, showing that you are serious about it. Questions can be very ordinary, questions can be serious. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa means only serious questioning. There are several people who ask lazy questions for nothing. Sometimes when I walk by the road, I have seen people from the neighbouring house ask, 'Sir, what is God?' By the time you answer, he has gone away. He is not interested. Just an idle question. That is all. So, such people are there. But, here it is different. I am serious about it. I must have it.

Sevayā, ‘through the service of the teacher’. Service is a tremendous source of spiritual development, character development. In the *Mahābhārata* in several places, you will find even Śrī Kṛṣṇa scolding Duryodhana, the wicked Kuru family prince, ‘you don’t seem to have served old people, senior people, that is why your character is so bad.’ Learn to serve, that is how you develop high character. Otherwise, arrogance alone will remain, nothing else. So, here, service of the elders, service of those who know more than you, service of the holy, is always considered to be a spiritual *sādhanā.*

Upadekṣyanti te jñānam, ‘they will instruct you in this *jñāna*’; who?, *jñāninaḥ tattvadarśinaḥ,* ‘those who are *jñānis,* who have realized the Truth’. *Tattva* is the word for Truth, meaning ‘the thing as it is’. They will communicate to you this *jñāna*. This step is needed to achieve *jñāna*. You have to receive it from somebody who *has* it. A student goes to school; he doesn’t know anything about physiology or other subjects; the teacher teaches the subjects and the student learns; somebody gives and somebody receives. In this way when we go to higher levels of knowledge-seeking, we need much more help from a teacher, but mostly by hints and suggestions, not through loud expositions. At lower level, you need detailed knowledge communication. At higher levels, your mind is capable of understanding things. So, a hint or suggestion is enough here and there, and the student begins to understand things better. The difference between a primary school class and a postgraduate class is that, in the latter, you don’t have, you don’t need, detailed teaching, you only receive hints and suggestions, ‘look into that book in the library and find it out for yourself’, is the way of teaching. In that way you make the student depend upon himself or herself, because it is a mature mind. But in the earlier stages it is not so. You have to teach every little thing, from a, b, c, d, onwards. So, in this case, in the case of the highest knowledge, the knowledge of Brahman, the infinite, immortal and non-dual Reality, it is taught with very brief utterances: the briefer the better. Even silence is far better than speech in this particular field.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa mentions three methods: first is *tad viddhi praṇipātena,* ‘know that by salutation’. If the student goes in an arrogant manner, that cannot be a fit mind for receiving knowledge. When one joins the university with a very arrogant mind, what will he or she gain there? Nothing. I want

something, there is a vacuum within me, so I go there. So, I respect the teacher who teaches me. He knows more than I do. So, we need that spirit of humility, to be able to receive what is given, and to digest what is received. That attitude of mind is absolutely essential for true knowledge. Knowledge will then flower into character and wisdom. Here *jñāna* means that knowledge which is ripe enough to flower into wisdom and becomes capable of giving spiritual freedom to the seeker. That is the type of *jñāna* that is mentioned here. So, *upadekṣyanti te jñānam*, 'they will communicate to you that *jñāna*'; who?, *jñāninaḥ,* 'those who have that *jñāna*', *tattvadarśinaḥ,* 'those who have realized the *tattvam*'. *Tattvam* is different from *matam* or opinion. What is the truth of a thing? That is called *tattvam.* And the supreme *tattvam* is Brahman. Behind the whole universe is that one infinite truth, that is called by the Upaniṣads *satyasya satyam,* the Truth of truth, or supreme *tattvam,* or *param tattvam,* etc. These are the words used in Vedantic literature.

So, we can achieve, through the help of spiritually competent teachers, this knowledge, just as we get other types of knowledge from other teachers. They are all knowledge, may be physical, may be psychological, may be spiritual. But, for Vedanta, all knowledge is sacred. And we are in search of knowledge. That is why we are advised to light that fire of knowledge in the heart of the child. He or she wants to read books, to go to school, and doesn't want merely to play with dolls any more. That is how the child starts to light the fire of knowledge in his or her mind. And the teacher in the school helps him or her to make this fire flame forth into a big fire, so that he or she can digest all that one has learnt, assimilate them, make them part of one's character, and become a very good citizen and a very good person on the way to the highest spiritual realization. By knowing this highest truth, what do we gain? No more delusion, no more doubts, no more weakness, that comes in the next *śloka*.

यज्ज्ञात्वा न पुनर्मोहमेवं यास्यसि पाण्डव।
येन भूतान्यशेषेण द्रक्ष्यस्यात्मन्यथो मयि॥३५॥

Yajjñātvā na punarmohamevam yāsyasi pāṇḍava;
Yena bhūtānyaśeṣeṇa drakṣyasyātmanyatho mayi—4. 35

‘Knowing which, you shall not, O Pāṇḍava, again get deluded like this, and by which you shall see the whole of creation in (your) Self and in Me.’

By realizing ‘this truth’, *tattvam, na punarmoham evam yāsyasi pāṇḍava,* ‘this kind of delusion which has come upon you will never come again’. You will be going beyond all possibility of delusion. Not only actuality, but also the possibility of delusion. Knowledge of Truth destroys even the possibility of delusion. That is the nature of that Truth. *Yena bhūtānyaśeṣeṇa drakṣyasyātmani,* ‘by that knowledge, you will see the whole world in yourself, in the infinite Atman’; *atho mayi,* ‘as also in Me’, in Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in the Divine Incarnation. That is how, in spiritual development, we take away all sense of separateness between all beings. Normally, we feel separate from each other. As you grow spiritually, separateness becomes removed. We are essentially one. That is the highest knowledge. What a great change is coming over the whole world today! Even one hundred years ago, there were much of racial differences, caste differences and all sorts of other differences. We are overcoming all these differences, slowly and steadily. We are one, humanity is one. What a beautiful concept!

Nearly ninety years ago, Swami Vivekananda referred to this growing international context of human relations in his lecture in Madras on *Vedanta in Its Application to Indian Life* (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 3, pp. 240–41):

‘The second great idea which the world is waiting to receive from our Upaniṣads is the solidarity of the universe. The old lines of demarcation and differentiation are vanishing rapidly. … Our Upaniṣads say that the cause of all misery is ignorance; and that is perfectly true when applied to every state of life, either social or spiritual. It is ignorance that makes us hate each other, it is through ignorance that we do not know and do not love each other. As soon as we come to know each other, love comes, must come, for are we not one? Thus we find solidarity coming in spite of itself.

‘Even in politics and sociology, problems that were only national twenty years ago can no more be solved on national grounds only. They are assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of international grounds. International

organisations, international combinations, international laws are the cry of the day. That shows the solidarity.'

And we are also extending our knowledge of oneness with the non-human species also, like birds and other animals. We are looking to extend compassion to them. This kind of teaching is also coming to human beings. So, this is human evolution: separateness being broken down and our essential oneness we realize more and more.

This is the great achievement since the end of the Second World War in 1945. Up to the Second World War, there was so much stress on these differences. But, the Second World War gave a tremendous shake to the human mind, and a new wisdom began to invade the human hearts. After that you will find the slow and steady evolution of a 'humankind awareness'. All the United Nations Organizations are centred in this concept of a humankind awareness. We in India do not say that people in other countries are *mlecchas.* We were telling it till about seventy years ago. Today, we will not say so at all. So also, Western people used to say of non-whites as something below human dignity. Even in Australia, the first time I visited it in 1958, there was the scourge of racial awareness, of separateness; but, during the last few years, I find that racial awareness is almost gone, leaving a small white group to hold on to it. The concept of human oneness is getting realized slowly. And this is the teaching of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (II. i. 11):

Manasaivedam āptavyam neha nānāsti kiñcana;
Mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum gacchati ya iha nāneva paśyati —

'Mind must be educated to grasp this truth', *manasaivedam āptavyam.* What is the truth? *Neha nānāsti kiñcana*, 'there is no *nānā* or many or separateness in this world'. Difference is merely on the surface. Deep down there is unity. And then, *mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum gacchati ya iha nāneva paśyati,* 'one who sees separateness and lives according to that understanding, he or she goes from death to death'. Against this teaching of her great sages, India has been emphasizing separateness. All India became so many separate pieces, congeries of little states, all separate from each other, fighting with each other, and falling a prey to foreign invasions. So, we experienced the truth of this *mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum gacchati ya iha nānā iva*

paśyati. In spite of this teaching of Vedanta, we sought differences everywhere. How many differences we created between one human being and another! Untouchability, unapproachability, un-see-ability, all sorts of evils. And, when foreigners come, we won't touch them. We will not share with them what we know, or learn from them.

Al Beruni, who came to India in the 11th century AD, says in his travel book on India: 'What has happened to these people? They have become so narrow, so exclusive, they won't share their knowledge with anybody else. Their ancestors were not like this. They learnt from others, they gave to others. But these people have become so narrow.' What he said a thousand years ago became true for many centuries. And about ninety years ago, Swami Vivekananda also referred to this national folly (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 5, p. 52):

'India's doom was sealed the very day they invented the word mleccha and stopped from communion with others.'

We are passing from that to a broader attitude today. We want to mix with other people. We want to see the same human being everywhere, the same compassion, the same capacity to help others. What a beautiful idea! People who go to America often get immense help from somebody there, though they never knew each other. Then they realize, humanity is one.

There is a story told of Swami Rama Tirtha of Punjab, one of the great intellectuals and spiritual teachers of India in the first part of this century. He was very much inspired by Swami Vivekananda. He organized Swamiji's lectures in Lahore in 1897. And very soon, he took to sannyasa. He was a professor of mathematics, a very brilliant mind. Then he went to Japan; from there he went to America. Without money he went; thus, he landed in America; it is told in a story: An American met him. 'Well, you have come from where? From India?' 'Yes, I come from India.' 'So, where are you going to stay? With whom are you going to stay?' Rama Tirtha immediately said, 'I am going to stay with you!' That American was taken aback. He said it with such naturalness, and he became his host and looked after him.

So, you can see, when our minds become free from this idea of separateness, we can *enter* into the heart of other people. Otherwise, you cannot enter into the hearts of others. That is the teaching very much emphasized in Vedanta: *mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum gacchati ya iha nāneva paśyati,* 'even if you see a slight difference, that difference will destroy you'. Difference is a fact, but it is not the truth; the truth is, we are one. Physically, we see things are different. Everything is different from everything else. But behind it there is truth, there is unity, *ekam eva advitīyam,* 'the one Brahman without a second' behind the many that is the universe. So, that is *jñāna*. With that *jñāna* we shall be able to achieve great strength, no more of weakness, no more of dying again and again due to cowardice, due to a sense of separateness; such states will never come if this is realized in human life. Today's India is growing in that dimension. Though the old pull is there, to stress human separateness, caste separateness, the overall tendency is to overcome all this and realize our basic humanity, not only within India but also outside.

What a beautiful situation it is for human development in a big way, all over the world; anybody who has gone abroad will be able to vouch for the truth that humanity is the same everywhere. They have the same heart, the same compassion, the same strong hand to help when you are in a difficulty. I myself have experienced plenty of such events in my many foreign cultural lecture tours to about fifty countries. I got down from the railway train in the London station, Paddington or Liverpool station. I got into a taxi, I was to go to some place. So, after I reached the place, when I gave the taxi fare to the Englishman driver, he said, 'No, I won't take any money from you. You are yourself doing good work, I won't take the fare!' I was surprised. Then I said, 'No, that gentleman near us is going to give you, not I. He earns very well, please take.' We gently forced the money on him. Otherwise, he would not have accepted it at all. I never knew him, he never knew me. But, something between us, psychologically speaking, made that sense of separateness vanish. I went to the pilgrim centre of St. Francis of Assissi in Italy. When I went there, I found that somebody from Rome had reserved a room for me in a hotel; the hotel man said: 'This is the room, Swamiji, for you for which he has paid the money.' That is all. I didn't know who that person was. Like that, in many places, people come out to

help you because they feel we are all one. That must be strengthened. So, the Upaniṣad said, *Manasaivedam āptavyam,* 'this truth must be grasped by the mind'; teach your children from childhood this truth, *neha nānāsti kiñcana,* 'there is no separateness at all here'; we are essentially one. This sense of separateness must be removed from the minds of children. Then a better world will come. *Mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum āpnoti ya iha nāneva paśyati,* 'one who sees differences here, they go from death to death,' and not from life to life. Life to life will only come by realizing our oneness with each other.

That is going to be the development of India in the next century. Tremendous harmony will come between one human being and another, between one group and another; these present troubles are but passing phases. Eventually they will be overcome when the message of Vedanta spreads among the people. The philosophy that stands sponsor to our national development and international relations is the philosophy of Vedanta. And many people are studying Vivekananda's presentation of Vedanta, his great teaching of oneness, non-separateness and the spirit of *tyāga* and *seva*, renunciation and service. As Sri Ramakrishna said, 'tie the knowledge of Advaita in the fold of your cloth, and then live whatever way you like'. That Advaitic *jñāna* must be there within you. Then you will always be successful in dealing with each other. So, *yena bhūtāni aśeṣeṇa drakṣyasi ātmani atho mayi*, 'by this knowledge, you will see all beings in you, and also in Me', in your own infinite Atman and in Me, the Divine Personality, *Puruṣottama,* that is Śrī Kṛṣṇa. And millions of people are attracted to him because of his universal dimension. Anything universal will attract everybody. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa has that tremendous charm and fascination to attract people. He is the 'Pied Piper' of the Indian heart. As soon as his music is sounded on the flute, the whole world will come to him. That is the nature of that attraction. The whole of India is devoted to Śrī Kṛṣṇa because of that. He is our own *antaryāmin,* the inner Self. Having said this, the next *śloka* 36 says:

अपि चेदसि पापेभ्यः सर्वेभ्यः पापकृत्तमः।
सर्वं ज्ञानप्लवेनैव वृजिनं सन्तरिष्यसि॥३६॥

Api cedasi pāpebhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ pāpakṛttamaḥ;
Sarvam jñānaplavenaiva vṛjinam santariṣyasi — 4. 36

'Even if you are the most sinful among all the sinful, yet, by the raft of knowledge alone, you will go across all sin.'

Even if one is the worst amongst sinners, even then, he or she can cross this ocean of sin by taking recourse to that 'ship of knowledge', *jñānaplava;* knowledge is compared to a ship here. *Api cedasi pāpebhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ pāpakṛttamaḥ*, 'even if you are the worst sinner among all sinners', even then, *jñānaplavenaiva,* 'through the boat of spiritual knowledge alone', you will cross this ocean of, *vṛjinam,* 'sin' or evil; *santariṣyasi,* 'you shall cross'; all knowledge, especially spiritual knowledge, is powerful; 'knowledge destroys fear', is the English saying. So, don't despair. There is hope for everyone. This *jñāna* is a great blessing to everyone. *Sarvam vṛjinam,* 'all sin', *santariṣyasi,* 'you shall cross'. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives a telling example in the next verse, verse 37:

यथैधांसि समिद्धोऽग्निर्भस्मसात्कुरुतेऽर्जुन।
ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात्कुरुते तथा॥३७॥

Yathaidhāmsi samiddho'gniḥ bhasmasāt kurute'rjuna;
Jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute tathā— 4. 37

'As a blazing fire reduces all fuel into ashes, so, O Arjuna, does the fire of spiritual knowledge reduce all actions to ashes.'

Just as fire reduces to ashes a huge pile of wood, *edhāmsi* is fuel, *yathaidhāmsi samiddho'gniḥ,* 'as fire that has been lit up', *bhasmasāt kurute, arjuna,* 'reduces to ashes, O Arjuna'; *jñānāgniḥ sarva karmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute tathā*, 'similarly, the fire of *jñāna* thus burns to ashes all actions', and only *jñāna* remains. *Jñāna-svarūpa,* '*jñāna* is our true nature', that alone remains out of this process. That is how *jñāna* is being praised here in a series of verses. As referred to earlier, *Jñānāgniḥ,* 'the fire of spiritual knowledge' is a beautiful concept! Just like the *jaṭharāgni,* 'digestive fire', which also I had referred to earlier. That knowledge fire will burn all unwelcome experiences, leaving no trauma behind, as I had referred to earlier. This is what all people need to develop as the

consummation of their character. High character means a tremendous blazing fire of spiritual knowledge within. A Gandhiji had a tremendous blazing fire of *jñāna* within. So, also all great spiritual teachers. Ordinary human beings, those who are exceptionally good, also manifest this fire of *jñāna*. So, this is not a theory, not a dogma, but a truth to be realized by everyone. When you light the fire of *jñāna*, you are able to handle all your mental troubles and tensions. Today there is so little of *jñāna*-fire in modern humanity. Therefore, so much of trouble, psychic trouble, nervous trouble, and tendency to violence and suicide. But when this *jñāna*-fire is lit up, then we shall achieve that stability. Nothing evil can remain because fire destroys everything. Even the *kacaḍā* or rubbish you put into the fire is burnt down. So this is how the idea of *jñāna* as fire is very much expounded and praised in this section of the *Gītā*. And the next *śloka* adds one more dimension to this praise of *jñāna*.

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते।
तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति॥३८॥

Na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitramiha vidyate;
Tatsvayam yogasamsiddhaḥ kālenātmani vindati — 4. 38

'Verily, there exists nothing in this world as purifying as *jñāna* or spiritual knowledge. In good time, having reached perfection in *yoga,* one realizes that in oneself.'

Na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitram iha vidyate, 'there is nothing so purifying in this world as *jñāna*'. *Pavitram* means purifying. You wash your clothes with water, your body also with water and soap, all that is good for the body. But for the rest of the human system, the only purifying agent is knowledge. Nothing is so purifying as *jñāna* in this world, *iha* means in this world, in this human life. *Tatsvayam yogasamsiddhaḥ kālenātmani vindati,* 'when you get perfection in *yoga* in course of time, you realize it in yourself', not second hand. It may be a small fire to begin with, but it will become a mighty fire. That will come to you, because that is your true nature, says Vedanta; you need not beg for it or borrow it. *Kālenātmani vindati,* 'you achieve in course of time'; you cannot be hurrying it through; it takes time to build up this fire and to get that blessing from the fire of

knowledge. *ātmani vindati*, 'you will enjoy it in yourself'. You will experience: 'yes, there is that fire within me. Minor troubles will not trouble me now.' Suppose you are able to tell that, what does it mean? That means that you have already lit up that fire of knowledge. When you are able to overcome major troubles, then you can say, 'yes, that fire has now become stronger, much more powerful.'

In this way, there are people, who can stand a good deal of stress and strain, because they have this fire within. Others who have very little of this fire, get upset over little things. Just like what we say in neurology: the threshold of pain is different in different people. Some people can stand a little pain; some people cannot stand even a little bit of pain. In 1933, we had young students in my hostel in our Mysore Ashrama; we got a doctor to inoculate them against malaria. Most of the students could stand the injection. But one or two students, as soon as they saw the needle, they fell unconscious. Seeing the needle, they became unconscious! You can imagine, therefore, how little fire of *jñāna* is there in such a person. But, even he can change. He can build up strength later on. So, in this way you will find that the capacity to handle life successfully depends upon the *jñāna*-fire you light up in your heart, the fire of spiritual knowledge. If that fire is fine, burning bright, you can stand any nonsense, you will not be disturbed at all. That is a steady mind. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has already spoken about it at the end of the second chapter dealing with the *sthitaprajña,* 'the man or woman of steady wisdom'. Here, in this chapter, he is expounding this subject in some more detail.

'Lighting the fire of knowledge', is a beautiful conception. All knowledge is meant for that. The knowledge that you get in education is not meant to be merely book knowledge, but knowledge manifesting as integrated character. That is how you realize you have lit the fire of knowledge in your heart. *Na hi jñānena sadṛśam,* 'there is nothing equal to *jñāna*'. When the Mysore University was started over seventy years ago, they took this *śloka* as the motto: *na hi jñānena sadṛśam,* 'nothing equal to *jñāna*'. What a beautiful conception! Our mottoes are wonderful. But universities rarely try to come up to the motto. Just like our democratic state's national motto: *satyameva jayate,* 'truth alone triumphs', and our nation now follows the opposite: *asatyameva jayate.* That is why mottoes

do not play a very big part, unless there is a will to translate motto into lived experience. Who will get *jñāna?* The next two or three verses deal with this subject. You must have *śraddhā,* 'positive faith'. Without *śraddhā,* there is no knowledge. That is the next verse.

Last Sunday, about three hundred students attended the Youth Convention here. Among them some four had inscribed their names on the chairs in this hall. They never asked the question: 'Should I spoil this chair?' That shows that discriminative fire, that *jñānāgni,* had not been lit up in themselves yet. ' Is it worthwhile? Is it proper?'—that is how one will light the fire of discriminative knowledge. In small instances you can experience in life this presence of the fire of knowledge. The whole conduct then becomes transformed. These are all instances where, in our whole education, there is not that sufficient lighting of the fire of *jñāna*. There is reading of books, hearing lectures, memorizing something, and passing examinations. But have you lit the fire of knowledge in yourself? That is what is said here:

Yathaidhāmsi samiddho'gniḥ bhasmasāt kurute'rjuna;
Jñānāgniḥ sarva karmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute tathā —

'As the fire lit with wood reduces the wood to ashes, O Arjuna, so also the fire of knowledge reduces to ashes all actions.'

'Actions will be reduced to ashes by the fire of knowledge'. That is the supreme uniqueness of the human being. He or she acts, but the prompting must come from a deeper source, namely, that fire of spiritual knowledge by which the whole of life becomes well organized, well disciplined, and fruitful from every point of view.

In the language of today's astrophysics we can say, 'In the beginning there was nothing except the Background Material in its immovable condition.' *ānīd avātam*, in the way the ancient *Ìg-Veda* puts it, 'It existed without any movement', without any action, without any *karma* or what they call in modern philosophical language 'any process'; processes had not begun. The universe is a product of process. Behind the process is pure Being; then comes this process. Reality and process. And later, at the end of a cosmic cycle, the whole process is transformed back into reality. What we

are now experiencing is the acceleration of the process. When that Big Bang took place starting the process, every fraction of a second the world started passing through processes. More and more the concrete world was coming into existence. In the beginning it was not a concrete world. In that state of singularity, electrons, protons, gravitation, etc., never existed during the first few moments of cosmic evolution. Slowly, they began to differentiate and manifest. Then this substantial universe in which we all live and function came into being later. These are all called processes only, up to the human level. Process cannot do anything by itself; it has no freedom. But when evolution reaches the human level, the human being has the power to return the process back into being. This comes from *jñāna*. This *karma* becomes transformed into *jñāna*. So, human beings can understand the source from which we and the universe have come. *We* can become one with it. No object or non-human species of living beings in the world can do so. That is because in the Vedantic conception, that background material is not a mere material entity. It is pure consciousness, infinite and non-dual: *satyam jñānam anantam brahma,* 'Brahman is Truth, Consciousness, and Infinitude', says the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*.

Śrī Saṅkarācārya says in his commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (prelude to 2. 4. 12):

'The *Paurāṇikas* hold that this dissolution (of the universe) or *pralaya* is natural. While that which is consciously effected by the knowers of Brahman through their knowledge of Brahman is called extreme dissolution through their knowledge of Brahman, which happens through the cessation of ignorance.'

Paurāṇikas mean the writers of the several *Purāṇas;* they expound both the manifestation of the universe from the non-dual Brahman as its source and its final dissolution in Brahman after several millions of years; this is also what modern Western cosmology says, except that, that source is not consciousness but a highly dense background material; therefore, no human being can *experience* that background material. That truth alone makes a great difference between Vedanta and Western cosmology.

That is what humanity has been endowed with, the capacity for *jñāna*. It is through *jñāna* you go back to your own source which is also the source of

the universe. ‘What is this universe? Where has it come from? What is its true nature? What is my true nature?’—This kind of understanding, the whole process of it, is known as *jñāna*. So, *jñāna* is able to take us back to the original state, to understand what is that ultimate reality, that Brahman. All cosmic matter is subject to processes. We human beings are also partly being processed by nature. But, we can also process ourselves. We can stop the process of nature. We have that freedom. This is what takes us to the higher levels of *jñāna*. No non-human species in the world has *jñāna* except of the most elementary kind: they can understand this little material world. *Jñānamasti samastasya jantor viṣaya gocare.* In the *Devī Māhātmyam*, a very great book, ‘the Glory of the Divine Mother’, occurs this *śloka* (1. 47). ‘For all these creatures, their knowledge exists only in their sensory apparatus.’ That is all. Nothing higher than the sensory knowledge. Some sensation comes, and some reaction takes place. That action-reaction process is the knowledge they have, all limited by the sensory system. It is only in the human being that we find the capacity to go beyond the sensory level of knowledge into the intellectual level of knowledge. That knowledge can be further developed into the knowledge of the ultimate reality, the Brahman; that reality’s name itself is knowledge; it is *jñāna svarūpa* or *cit svarūpa.*

The process, called by mistake creation, starts with: ‘I am one, let me become the many.’ In the process of cosmic evolution, that Consciousness remains latent and becomes patent when cosmic evolution rises to the level of organic evolution. When that organic evolution proceeds further and further, that truth of consciousness manifests more and more, developing into self-consciousness in the human being from being only consciousness of the objective world in the pre-human species. The human being evolves to realize the eternal purity, freedom, and universality of that infinite Consciousness or Brahman or Atman. That ultimate Reality is beyond name and form; but some tentative name has to be given to understand it, hence the words Atman or Brahman. In his commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1. 4. 7), Śaṅkarācārya utters this caution, explaining the use of *iti* in *ātmā iti; iti* means thus: *yaḥ tu ātma-śabdasya iti paraḥ prayogaḥ, ātmaśabda pratyayayoḥ ātma-tattvasya paramārthato aviṣayatvam jñāpanārtham*—‘the use of the particle *iti*, along with the word “Atman” …

only signifies that the truth of Atman (the Self) is really beyond the scope of the term and the concept of "Atman" (or "Self")."

It is this evolution that results in the development of what the *Gītā* has referred to as *jñāna* and *jñānāgniḥ.* It cannot be produced from the dull dead material background of the current modern Western astronomy. How childish it looks to trace Einstein's theory of relativity or the infinite compassion of a Jesus or a Buddha to that background material! The *Gītā* will tell more about this and give a wider definition of nature than what modern Western science understands, in verses 4 to 7 in the seventh chapter.

Therefore, here is a great challenge before the human mind. Let us be part of the cosmic process, but let us be also the observer of that process. That is a wonderful word, 'observer', in Sanskrit, *sākṣi.* You are outside of it. You are watching it, you are seeing it. You are trying to know it. You can control it. Then you turn to yourself. Try to understand the body, its various sensory systems, psychic system, and what lies beyond it. What is my true nature? That infinite Atman, our original source, that pure consciousness, is pulsing in me. I can realize that truth. This is something wonderful. That is the supreme uniqueness of the human being. The famous mathematician-mystic, I think Blaise Pascal, made a beautiful statement: 'In space, the universe engulfs me and reduces me to a pinpoint.' That is the first sentence. Physically speaking, spatially speaking, what are we?, a small speck of dust in the immensity of the universe! That is called part of the cosmic process. Is it all? Having said this, in the next sentence Pascal says: 'But *through thought we understand that universe*.' That infinite universe that is engulfing me, we are able to comprehend it with this power of thought when *jñāna* appears in us! That is the greatest mystery of the human being. If you don't accept this mystery, you have not understood even a bit of the science of human possibilities. This is slowly dawning on Western physical science, especially its nuclear science, today, where the observer is becoming an important datum for investigation. By the *act* of observation, we change the nuclear phenomenon. Therefore, it is a big datum to be investigated. Let us try to investigate it. That is the situation in physical science.

So, the *jñānam* which is mentioned in this 37th verse is that infinite pure consciousness, pulsing in you and me, and in all. We neglect it. We don't take care of it. In our day-to-day life when we go to school and try to gain knowledge, we are actually engaged in seeking the pulsing of knowledge ever within us. Says Swami Vivekananda: 'education is the manifestation of the perfection already within the human being.' But we mostly neglect it. We only stuff the brain with some facts and formulae, and live an indifferent life, just like a part of the processes of nature. What about your uniqueness? That is what you have to discover. When you do so, this *śloka* becomes meaningful. *Sarvam karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate,* 'all *karma* in its entirety, O Pārtha, finds its consummation in *jñāna.*' All these processes came from the infinite consciousness, the infinite reality behind this universe, from Brahman. In our *Sanātana Dharma's* theological language we say, Brahman as Viṣṇu, the infinite reality, prompted Brahmā, the Reservoir of all knowledge, who came from the navel lotus of Viṣṇu, to evolve the universe. The entire process of the universe began from Brahmā in the masculine. The other is Brahman, in the neuter gender. So, that is how, in theological language as well as artistic language, we describe the nature of the reality and the process. Brahmā knew that within himself is the infinite Brahman. He projected this universe out of Himself. It started with a *sphoṭa,* i.e., explosion, through the mental activity of Brahmā. Brahmā heard a sound. Looked around, nobody was there. Wherefrom has this sound come? And what was this sound? It was *tapaḥ, tapaḥ,* do *tapas,* do *tapas.* What kind of *tapas? Jñāna-tapas, yasya jñānamayam tapaḥ.* 'His *tapas* is *jñānamaya*'. We are also dealing with *jñānamaya tapas* in the *Gītā*. Through this *jñānamaya tapas* Brahmā projected this universe. *Tapas* transformed itself into a cosmic process, and it is still going on. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will tell further about this subject in verses 16 to 20 of chapter 8.

This Indian truth of consciousness being the source of the universe and not a dense background material is being propounded by the erstwhile materialistic astronomer, Fred Hoyle, in his new book: *The Intelligent Universe,* as I have mentioned earlier.

When we spiritually dissolve the universe in Brahman, we achieve something wonderful. Process will still be going on, but we know that the

whole process is nothing but *jñāna* of Brahman. God in Vedanta means that infinite consciousness, *satyam jñānam anantam brahma.* Where is It?, *yo veda nihitam guhāyām,* 'who realizes It hidden in one's own heart'. That infinite one is present in the smallest particle in the universe. That is how we have to realize this truth. That is a great thought occurring in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad. Gītā* is taking from the Upaniṣads the essential teachings, giving it in a form which will be very practical. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: try to convert all action into *jñāna*. That is its own source. That is what is meant by *sarvam karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate.*

Then, try to know this *jñāna* from people who can teach it to you; then comes a high praise of *jñāna*. *Na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitram iha vidyate,* 'there is nothing so purifying as knowledge, in this world'. All our children would benefit from going to school, if only they know they are in search of *jñāna*. What great change will then come in the educational system and the product of that system! But there is absolutely no understanding of this subject at all, neither from the teachers nor from the students. *Tat svayam yoga samsiddhaḥ kālenātmani vindati,* 'when you are established in it, slowly you will achieve the highest realization of your own true nature'. That supreme knowledge you will experience *in yourself* once you are established in this pursuit of *jñāna*, even as a primary school student. Continue that pursuit of *jñāna*, eventually you will get the highest *jñāna*, undifferentiated, free from all limitations. That is God in Vedanta.

Brahman is described by Vedanta as *jñānasvarūpa,* 'of the nature of *jñāna*', *anubhavasvarūpa,* 'of the nature of experience', *satsvarūpa,* 'of the nature of Truth'. Śaṅkarācārya writes in his Introduction to his *Brahma Sūtras* sloka-in-eng-last-line: *ātma ekatva vidyā pratipattaye sarve vedāntā ārabhyante,* 'all the Upaniṣads are working to expound the realization of the science of the unity of the Self', and then continues: *anubhava avasānam brahma vijñānam,* 'knowledge of Brahman consummates in the *experience* of Brahman.' By the knowledge of a chair we do not get transformed into a chair. But, when we *know* Brahman, we realize that we are Brahman. In the inner life, all knowing tends to being.

So, all such knowledge is *assimilation.* Swami Vivekananda called education as 'assimilation of ideas'. Whatever knowledge I take in, I

become transformed into it. That is how character develops. That is where knowledge progresses smoothly from the secular to the spiritual.

Take a village boy or girl, put him or her to school. Already a purifying agent has come to them. He or she starts to understand oneself and to understand the world. Otherwise, he or she was just a creature. But a little education puts him or her on the road of shedding creatureliness. I am not an item among items, I am an individual.' That is the beginning of *ātmajñāna*. You continue it, beyond the school and all institutional education, and enter into spiritual education. This is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling here, that you transform your whole life of activity into *jñāna*, into pulsations of knowledge.

When one is established in this *yogasamsiddhi,* 'being established in the *yoga* of *jñāna*', he or she will achieve this knowledge of the Atman, *kālena,* 'in course of time'. We are already in the world process, namely, the evolutionary process; now know that another process is taking you *back to the source.* Sitting in meditation is also a process. You are developing a new type of process, which takes you *back* to your own source, the infinite, the immortal and the divine. From Brahman we came, in Brahman we live, unto Brahman we return, says the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad.* The second process is therefore significant so far as the human being is concerned. He or she alone can find out one's own origin. No other creature in the world can understand its origin. That knowledge comes through the second process known as *nivṛtti,* well explained in the Introduction. The other is *pravṛtti,* mind going out. Here, it is the mind going *in,* the whole of action being transformed from material to spiritual nature. The whole action becoming spiritual.

There is nothing unspiritual in human life. In Vedantic vision, everything is spirituality. That infinite Brahman is in you, in me, in all, pulsing; we neglect it. Don't neglect it, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is that which gives meaning to what you are and what you do. Otherwise, you remain a creature in the hands of the forces of physical nature, of those processes of nature. Don't be so, don't be so, says Vedanta. Try to understand this truth.

Sages have seen the same Atman in every being. That Brahman which is transcendental is also present in all of us. This is the living philosophy

expounded by the sages. In the *Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad,* a sage, having discovered this truth by this inward process of *nivṛtti,* discovered his own infinite Atman. And then when he looked out, he found the same Atman in everyone. Then he burst out into a beautiful song:

Tvam strī tvam pumān asi tvam kumāra utavā kumārī;
Tvam jīrṇo daṇḍena vañcasi tvam jāto bhavasi viśvato mukhaḥ —

'Thou art the man, thou art the woman, thou art the boy, *kumāra,* thou art also the girl, the *kumārī,* thou art the old man tottering on the sticks, thou art born in these multiform ways in this world.'

So, when one realizes the Atman in oneself, and looks out, he or she sees the same Atman everywhere. There you have undertaken and succeeded in turning that cosmic process from a 'going out' into a 'coming in': *pravṛtti* to *nivṛtti.* And *nivṛtti* is the source of all values—moral, ethical, spiritual. Blending of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* is what makes for the stability of a civilization. This is what Śaṅkarācārya told us in the Introduction to his *Gītā* commentary which I referred to more fully in the beginning of this book. *Gītā* is the supreme book which combines *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* as a totality of human life and human activity. So, both are processes: one is outgoing, the other is incoming. When you begin to think: Is what I am doing correct?, you are already in *nivṛtti;* if you don't think at all, simply do, it is called *pravṛtti.*

In today's politics and other areas of life, we can see so little thinking, so little *nivṛtti* and plenty of *pravṛtti,* full of noise, full of emotion and frenzy. That is why there is so much of violence and crime. There is no *nivṛtti* at all. It is *nivṛtti* that brings morality, ethics, and other high values into society. Human society has to combine these two. That is what is called 'a complete philosophy of life', where all aspects of life are taken into account. That is the Vedanta that is being expounded in the *Gītā.*, based upon the Upaniṣads, according to the statement given in Śaṅkarācārya's Introduction. Creatureliness and freedom are the choices before human beings. If I behave like this, I will remain a creature. If I behave like that, I become free.

Having spoken about the greatness of *jñāna*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says who will get this *jñāna*.

श्रद्धावाँल्लभते ज्ञानं तत्पर: संयतेन्द्रिय:।
ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिमचिरेणाधिगच्छति॥३९॥

Śraddhāvān labhate jñānam tatparaḥ samyatendriyaḥ;
Jñānam labdhvā parām śāntimacireṇādhigacchati —4. 39

'The person with *śraddhā* or faith and devotion, the master of one's senses, attains (this) knowledge. Having attained knowledge, one attains at once the supreme Peace.'

'If you have *śraddhā,* you will get *jñāna,*' *śraddhāvān labhate jñānam*. *Śraddhā* means faith in oneself, faith in the meaningfulness of this universe. *Śraddhā* is a great virtue, which mere intellectual education can easily destroy. And modern civilization contains so many people who have lost this *śraddhā.* Every third mind is negative. All positive mind is gone. Śaṅkarācārya defines *śraddhā* in a beautiful phrase: *śraddhā* is *āstikya-buddhi,* 'the positive frame of mind is called *śraddhā*'. The other is negative frame of mind. What a beautiful idea! A mind which is positive. When you are jostled in life, you are put into a difficulty, your mind becomes so defeated, you develop a negative state of mind. And the extreme form of negative state of mind, as I have explained before in the introduction, is called the cynical attitude. Absolutely no faith in truth, no faith in human beings, no faith in values. That is called cynicism. *Śraddhā* is the opposite of cynicism. The next *śloka* will deal with the cynical mind. The cynical mind cannot achieve any value, because it scorns all values. When you go to a school or a college, you go with *śraddhā,* 'There is *jñāna* to be achieved, I am going to achieve it here': with this positive attitude. Otherwise, what will you get by going to school and college? *Tatparaḥ,* 'devoted to That', devoted to Truth. *Tat* is the supreme word in Sanskrit for the highest reality. The *Gītā* will tell us in a later chapter: '*Om tat sat,*' 'Om That Truth, as the description of the ultimate Reality; *samyata indriyaḥ,* 'with tremendous discipline of the sensory energies'. You can't rise to knowledge until you discipline the sensory energies. Animals do not discipline sensory energies. But a human being has to discipline them. And

today, many in modern civilization do not like the word discipline or even self-discipline. That is short-sighted and unfortunate.

A scientist is doing an experiment regarding a certain aspect of nature. Why does he do so? He has *śraddhā.* He knows there is something hiding in nature; I am here to discover that truth. Suppose he knew in advance that there is no truth at all. Will he ever enter into a scientific inquiry? So, *śraddhā* means the meaningfulness of the world. I have accepted it, I am going in that direction. And I have a faith in myself, that I have the organic capacity to pierce the veil that covers the truth. This is the nature of *śraddhā.* Without *śraddhā* there is no physical science. Without *śraddhā,* there is no spiritual development. I have developed this subject fully in my two lectures in the first volume of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's publication: *Eternal Values for a Changing Society* on 'Science and Religion' and 'Faith and Reason'.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *tatparaḥ,* you are 'in search of truth'. What is the scientist after? He is also after truth. Many appearances are there. But when he penetrates, he finds these are not correct. Keep that as the goal. *Tatparaḥ,* 'devoted to That'. I am in search of Truth. And this human mind alone has 'the capacity to seek Truth', and not to live on mere appearances, or mere physical data. *Tatparaḥ. Samyatendriyaḥ,* 'he or she has disciplined one's sensory energy'. That is why when somebody abuses you, you can immediately abuse him back, but you will restrain yourself. 'No, let me wait and see. Why did he abuse me like this?' If you are a psychiatrist dealing with a psychiatric patient, the patient will abuse the doctor, but the doctor does not return the abuse. He has to understand why the patient has done it. He has to help the patient. Then only is he a doctor. So, *samyatendriyaḥ,* 'having control and discipline over the sensory system'. Then you develop a new mastery of life through a new energy. Then life becomes a pleasure to live. You don't remain a creature of circumstances. *Jñānam labdhvā parām śāntim acireṇādhigacchati,* 'when you get this *jñāna*, in no distant time you will achieve supreme peace', that peace coming from the centre of all peace, namely, the Atman: *Śānto'yam ātmā,* 'this Atman is all peace', says the Upaniṣad. What is the Atman? *Śanti* or peace. Peace, where all tensions have been resolved, that is called the Atman and that is our true nature.

I was asked to speak in the Deaking's University in Australia, near Melbourne, in 1986. They had also given me a cassette. There the subject was 'Religion and International Peace'. There this subject came up. That peace that comes from the deepest level of the human personality alone is peace. At the sensory level, there is tension. At the psychic level, there is tension. A touch of the Atman can bring peace into both the levels. If you realize the Atman fully, then you become a centre of infinite peace. This is the truth of the human being from the physical to the spiritual dimension. The university students attended the talk calmly, they were taking notes, they were very happy, they had not heard this kind of presentation before. Vedanta gives you a new insight into this subject. So, *jñānam labdhvā parām śāntim acireṇādhigacchati*. *Cireṇa* means long after. *Acireṇa,* not at all long after, but very soon. On the contrary,

अज्ञश्चाश्रद्दधानश्च संशयात्मा विनश्यति।
नायं लोकोऽस्ति न परो न सुखं संशयात्मनः॥४०॥

Ajñaśca aśraddadhānaśca samśayātmā vinaśyati;
Nāyam loko'sti na paro na sukham samśayātmanaḥ —4. 40

'The ignorant person, the person without *śraddhā,* the doubting self, goes to destruction. The doubting self has neither this world nor the next nor happiness.'

Ajña, 'the ignorant person', *aśraddadhānaśca,* 'the person without *śraddhā*', the cynical mind, *samśayātmā,* 'constantly doubting person', *vinaśyati,* 'perishes'. He or she won't proceed higher, but will remain as he or she is, a creature. *Samśayātmā vinaśyati*, 'one full of doubts perishes'. In the Introduction to this book, I have referred to the discussion of this subject by Sylvano Ariety in the third volume of *Handbook of American Psychiatry,* where he says that American children must soon be rescued from this evil of too much doubting and the steps needed to correct it. Any one-sided intellectual development makes for cynicism. That capacity to love, to understand, and to become one with others, it is that capacity that makes one creative. He or she is touching some deeper core in one's own being. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is saying here: *Ajñaśca aśraddadhānaśca samśayātmā vinaśyati*. Three types: *ajña, aśraddadhāna, samśayātmā,* they all go

together, ‘the ignorant, the faithless, and the one who is full of doubts’. Here *ajña* is used in a wider sense, not a villager who has not gone to school; he is not the real *ajña;* he knows much more than you and I do about higher values. But *ajña* refers to the intellectual who is *ajña* of the higher levels of life, higher values of life. They have no sense of values. That is *ajña. Samśayātmā,* ‘the doubting self’, *vinaśyati,* ‘is destroyed’.

In every society you can find bundles of people of this nature, spiritually dead, uncreative. Something has happened to them. They have become stagnant. That is the most dangerous thing. It is spiritual death. Physical death is not so serious as spiritual death for the human being who is so high in evolution. Don’t die spiritually. Be alive, be full of joy, full of zest in life, take interest in the welfare of other people. In this way, live. That is called a *śraddhāvān,* if that is not there, *aśraddadhāna.* Such a person *vinaśyati,* ‘is destroyed’. With this kind of destruction, all creativity goes, he or she gets stuck up at the sensory level and remains there. *Nāyam loko’sti na paro na sukham samśayātmanaḥ*. *Samśayātmā,* ‘the doubting person’ can win neither this world, nor the next, nor happiness. They can’t make good friends, they can’t behave with other people in a happy way, nothing is possible because they are spiritually dead. So, this world they lose, and what lies beyond this, the ultimate reality, that also they lose. Now, the fourth chapter ends with two great wonderful and powerful verses, 41 and 42.

योगसंन्यस्तकर्माणं ज्ञानसंछिन्नसंशयम्।
आत्मवन्तं न कर्माणि निबध्नन्ति धनञ्जय॥४१॥

Yogasamnyasta karmāṇam jñānasamchinna samśayam;
ātmavantam na karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya —4. 41

‘With work renounced by *yoga* and doubts rent asunder by spiritual knowledge, O Dhanañjaya, actions do not bind one who is poised in the Self.’

O Arjuna, that person who is of such-and-such nature, no action can bind him or her. Such a person is free, even in this body, even while living and working in this world. What are those conditions? *Yogasamnyasta*

karmāṇam, 'one who has renounced all actions in *yoga*'. Spiritually he or she has transformed actions into knowledge, burnt them in the fire of knowledge. *Yogasamnyasta karmāṇam* means not merely giving up actions, leave the town or village, go to the jungle, and say to yourself: 'I have given up all action'. Not that type of people, but one who is acting, is busy, and yet he or she has renounced all of them through *yoga.* Such a person, *jñāna samchinna samśayam,* 'who has destroyed all doubts through *jñāna*'. *Jñāna* has come, doubts have completely been destroyed. Such a person, *ātmavantam*, 'who is fully established in the Self', 'O Arjuna, no *karma* can ever bind', *na karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya.* That is the wonderful verse here. *Samchinna* means 'destroying', knowledge destroying all doubts, *ātmavantam,* 'self-possessed', established in his or her own infinite Self, *na karmāṇi nibadhnanti,* 'no *karmas* can bind that person'. The last verse is similar. Therefore, if that is the truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is exhorting Arjuna, and through him all of us, in this modern age:

तस्मादज्ञानसम्भूतं हृत्स्थं ज्ञानासिनात्मनः।
छित्त्वैनं संशयं योगमातिष्ठोत्तिष्ठ भारत॥४२॥

Tasmād ajñānasambhūtam hṛtstham jñānāsinātmanaḥ;
Chitvainam samśayam yogamātiṣṭha uttiṣṭha bhārata—4. 42

'Therefore, cutting with the sword of knowledge, this doubt about the Self, born of ignorance residing in your heart, resort to *yoga,* and arise, O Bhārata!'

Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, this doubt, *hṛtstham,* 'that is creeping into your heart', crippling your life and action, destroy that doubt. *ājñānasambhūtam,* 'born out of *ajñāna,* ignorance or spiritual blindness'. That is creating doubts and uncertainties in your mind. Therefore, destroy it. How to destroy it?, *jñānāsinā*, 'by making *jñāna* into a sword', cut across the jungle of doubts and confusion in you. Here *jñāna* is compared to a sword; *asi* means sword. *Chittvā,* 'by destroying', these doubts and confusions; *enam,* 'this', this particular trouble that is on us now, our doubts, difficulties, confusions within, because there is not the fire of *jñāna* within. Take *jñāna* as a sword and cut across this jungle of doubts and uncertainties. Then, *yogam ātiṣṭha,* 'rise up to the level of *yoga*', and

uttiṣṭha bhārata, ‘stand up! O Arjuna!’ Arjuna was depressed at that time. The Upaniṣad says this again and again, *uttiṣṭha, uttiṣṭha.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa also says so in the *Gītā:* verse 37 of chapter 2 and verse 33 of chapter 11. *Yogam ātiṣṭha, uttiṣṭha bhārata,* ‘rise up to *yoga,* and *stand up!’* Stand up to break down this kind of doubt and these weaknesses within, cut them off. You can achieve it. Nature has given you the capacity. Utilize all those capacities and achieve freedom, freedom from doubt, freedom from fear. What a beautiful and powerful message is going to humanity from this great teacher, Śrī Kṛṣṇa! The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* also sends out this summons to all humanity in its third canto of the first chapter: *Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata, prāpya varān nibodhata*—‘Arise, Awake, and approaching noble people enlighten yourself!’ Swami Vivekananda gives a free rendering of this verse thus: ‘Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.’ This is the last verse of this fourth chapter. The third chapter, we have seen, also ended with a similar clarion call: ‘Thus, knowing the Atman that is superior to and beyond *buddhi,* or reason and will combined, and restraining the sense organs through the Self, O mighty armed, conquer the enemy, in the form of *kāma* or unrestrained lust, so hard to conquer!’

इति ज्ञान कर्म संन्यास योगो नाम चतुर्थोऽध्यायः।

Iti jñāna karma sannyāsa yogo nāma caturtho’dhyāyaḥ —

‘The end of chapter four, designated, *The Way of Renunciation of Action in Knowledge.’*

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 5

Sannyāsa-Yoga
The Yoga of Renunciation

This evening, 12 February 1989, we are entering into the fifth chapter. As I said before, these chapters are all very very important, conveying a profound message to all humanity, and not for the people of India alone. Wherever the human being is there and is striving for fulfilment, he or she needs guidance from a rationally satisfying philosophy. It is that philosophy which is expounded in the *Gītā,* and the very essential parts of that philosophy you get in these chapters.

This fifth chapter, entitled *Sannyāsa-yoga,* starts with a question dealing with whatever Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said in the fourth chapter. Arjuna finds some confusing elements in those teachings. That is being brought up in the opening verse of the fifth chapter.

अर्जुन उवाच –

Arjuna uvāca —

'Arjuna said:'

संन्यासं कर्मणां कृष्ण पुनर्योगं च शंससि ।
यच्छ्रेय एतयोरेकं तन्मे ब्रूहि सुनिश्चितम् ॥१॥

Sannyāsam karmaṇām kṛṣṇa punaryogam ca śamsasi;
Yacchreya etayorekam tanme brūhi suniścitam — 5. 1

'Renunciation of action, O Kṛṣṇa, you commend, and again, its performance; which of these two is the better one? Do tell me this decisively.'

'O Kṛṣṇa, you have praised *sannyāsa* or renunciation of *karma*—*sannyāsam karmaṇām kṛṣṇa*—you have praised it in the fourth chapter';

punaryogam ca śamsasi, 'and you also praise *karma-yoga,* doing of actions'. *Yat śreyaḥ etayoḥ ekam,* 'between the two, which one is more excellent'; *tat me brūhi suniścitam*, 'tell me that decisively', is Arjuna's question.

Very often, even the clearest teaching can confuse people. That is what often happens in all types of education. Ādi Śaṅkarācārya refers to this in his commentary on the *Kena Upaniṣad* (II. i)*,* in a beautiful Sanskrit sentence:

Ekasmāt guroḥ śṛṇvatām (*śiṣyāṇām madhye*)*,* 'among a number of students listening to a teacher in a class'; *kaścit yathāvat pratipadyate,* 'some students understand exactly what the teacher has said'; *kaścit ayathāvat pratipadyate,* 'some understand it wrongly'; *kaścit viparītam pratipadyate,* 'some understand it just the opposite of what was said'; and *kaścit na pratipadyate iti,* 'some will not understand even a word'.

These are the four types of students every teacher has to confront with in his or her work of education. So, in the case of the *Gītā* also, these doubts come, in spite of using the clearest language; and the whole Indian mind, for the last thousand years, has been completely confused on these very questions. The thought of the people took this turn: If I am to improve my mind, and if that is superior, I shall sit quiet and improve my mind; why go about here and there working hard? And the whole nation became lazy, and the training of the mind also vanished. This wrong understanding of the philosophy had ruined the nation.

After four years of exploding Vedantic thought bombs suited to the Western people in U.S.A. and England, Swami Vivekananda returned to India in 1897, and in the very first full public lecture on the soil of India in Ramnad, he summoned our nation to wake up and face the challenges of the modern age (*Lectures from Colombo to Almora*, p. 50; *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 3, pp. 145–46):

'The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking.… India, this motherland of ours…from her deep long sleep. None can resist

her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.'

We have to train the body, the senses and the mind; then we become great workers. That is the education of the whole man, not merely the thinking aspect. In the absence of this, we became mere intellectuals; we even failed to train our emotional faculties in the direction of human concern and human service. The whole body-mind complex became the servant of the tiny ego within the individual. And we can trace this happening in our recent history. In this modern age, fortunately, we got teachers like Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna. Śaṅkarācārya taught us *samādhi* but he also lived the most active life. We all forgot his active side, and turned our attention to experience *samādhi,* which means, in our case, deep sleep or laziness. For centuries together, our nation went to sleep. When I watch people working, like digging the earth, I see them lifting the spade in a half sleep condition. Our people have yet to gain work efficiency and humanist concern. It was that half-sleepy India that Swami Vivekananda summoned to wake up and face the modern challenges by bursting Vedantic thought bombs suited to our nation.

Now comes Śrī Kṛṣṇa's answer to this question which has worried Arjuna and which has been nagging our whole nation. We have to clarify it once for all in this modern period.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच –

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'Śrī Bhagavān said:'

संन्यासः कर्मयोगश्च निःश्रेयसकरावुभौ ।
तयोस्तु कर्मसंन्यासात् कर्मयोगो विशिष्यते ॥२॥

Sannyāsaḥ karmayogaśca niḥśreyasakarāvubhau;
Tayostu karmasannyāsāt karmayogo viśiṣyate — 5. 2

'Both renunciation and *yoga* of action lead to freedom; of these, the *yoga* of action is superior to the renunciation of action.'

There is no equivocation in this sentence, but we as a people have tried to find equivocation. What did Śrī Kṛṣṇa say? *Sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga,* 'renunciation of action to realize the Atman and the path of detached action in the spirit of *yoga'*, both these are capable of leading one to 'high spiritual development', *niḥśreyasa.* But, *tayostu,* 'between the two'; *karmasannyāsāt karmayogo viśiṣyate,* '*karma-yoga* is superior to *karma-sannyāsa*'. Renouncing actions is called *sannyāsa.* That is not so good. Engaging oneself in action and developing the spiritual awareness along with it, is far superior, *viśiṣyate,* 'is more excellent'. You may go to the forest, live in meditation, live a quiet life and try to realize the true Self. That is beautiful. But on the other hand, when you hear the cry of distress from thousands of people, if you go to serve them, make them better, you will still remain a spiritual seeker. This is certainly far better than that. We must remember that such a teaching has come from Buddha also. Though his teaching is essentially of the path of *jñāna* and monastic in application, yet when he went round the monastery and found in one cell a monk suffering from diarrhoea, he asked him, 'Did not any brother come to look after you, to serve you?' 'No Sir, they were all in meditation.' Buddha served him; then other brother monks came slowly. He asked them, 'Why did you not come to serve this monk; he was in distress.' 'Sir, we were all in meditation. And you have taught us meditation.' 'What foolish thing! You throw away your meditation. When you see a person in distress, you go and serve him!'

If a Buddha could say so, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that hundred times more, because his teaching is essentially a teaching of practical spirituality—spirituality in action. See the language: spirituality in action. Behind every action is spirituality. But it does a double good. It gives me some spiritual strength; it brings peace and solace to people around me. 'Certainly that is superior,' *tayostu karma sannyāsāt karmayogo viśiṣyate.* That is the clearest exposition. In the third chapter also Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said, 'Nobody remains without any action; everybody does some action impelled by one's own nature. Even sitting in meditation is an action.' These are the words Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said at that time. So, better to do action for the good of all. Any ignorant person works for fattening one's own life and career. But the intelligent person, the wise person, the enlightened person, works for the good of all. Why don't you then be an enlightened person? That came in the

third chapter. *Saktāḥ karmaṇyavidvāmso yathā kurvanti bhārata; Kuryād vidvāmstathā'saktaḥ cikīrṣurlokasamgraham*, to bring about *lokasamgraham,* 'welfare of the world'. You are a part of the world around you. You can't neglect all of them and remain quiet in your own way. That is not proper. That is called un-enlightened attitude. This is enlightened attitude. *Avidvān* and *vidvān;* two types of people. The *avidvān* will be busy making enormous efforts to gain for oneself; the *vidvān,* on the other hand, will also work very hard; he or she has in view the welfare of people around. These are the two types. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has shown that, apart from these two, there is a third type who will be busy developing one's own spirituality, not at all doing any worldly action, ever concerned with only one's own salvation, one's own peace of mind. Such a person doesn't care if there are hundreds of people starving around. It was that philosophy which influenced our people for centuries together. And the result is so much of sufferings all over the nation. Nobody cares. Everybody going to temple, prays only for one's self, 'O God, save me!' Not once have our people prayed to God to give His blessings to someone else! What kind of religion is it? What kind of spirituality is it? This question came in the modern period, first from Sri Ramakrishna, and then from Swami Vivekananda. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Religion is not for empty bellies'. And Swamiji said (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 5, p. 50):

'I do not believe in a God or religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth.'

These wails are going on all around us. Can't I go and look after them? Can't I wipe away the tears from the eyes of people? Is it not religion? Ask that question. The *Gītā* will tell you that it is true religion. Based on the Upaniṣads, the *Gītā* asks you to work. Why? Because, as prayer is a part of religion, work also is a part of religion. But we never understood this Upaniṣadic teaching. Today, Sri Ramakrishna comes and conveys to you that teaching. What is this world? The same Brahman, on whom you meditate in your heart, is also there in front of you in these millions of forms. They all have come from Brahman. The universe has come from Brahman, lives in Brahman, returns to Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna told Swami Vivekananda, 'Meditate closing your eyes on God within you, and when you open your eyes, the same God is in front of you in these forms.

Serve them.' There are not two gods. Only one God, who is inside as well as outside. *Antarbahiśca tat sarvam vyāpya nārāyaṇa sthitaḥ.* In the *Mahā Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* comes this verse. 'Nārāyaṇa exists both inside the human being and outside also.' We don't have the concept of a devil in our Indian philosophy. Inside, it is all God; open your eyes, and it is only devil! We have no such idea. The same divine is in every being. So, service of man becomes worship of God. Sri Ramakrishna expressed it in a very beautiful language: 'every *jīva* is *Śiva*. Service of the *jīva* is worship of *Śiva.*' So, we get today pure Advaita, non-dualistic philosophy, leading to love, compassion and service. Formerly, by Advaita was meant, *neti, neti,* 'not this, not this'; this is all *samsāra* and Brahman is transcendental. That Advaita was what our people took to for centuries—a negative Advaita. We want to be alone, we want to realize our Self. We don't want this *samsāra,* and won't get involved in its troubles. That is the idea that came later. Some of the later books also mentioned the same thing. In the monastic community, we say in Hindi: *Duniā tīn kāl me nahīm hai,* 'this world doesn't exist in the three divisions of time; past, present and future'. Why worry about it?

A different approach came from the Advaita Vedanta of Sri Ramakrishna. A human being there is in distress. How can you ignore that? So, that Advaita has become transformed into real Advaita today; that there is only One; as when you close your eyes, Brahman is there, so also when you open your eyes, Brahman is there. That message had come in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (II. ii. 11), which we studied here before we took up the *Gītā*. *Brahmaivedam amṛtam,* 'this whole world of manifestation is the same immortal Brahman'. See the words! *Idam,* a technical word in Vedanta meaning 'this manifested universe'. What is this universe? It is Brahman. What Brahman? *Amṛtam brahma*, 'that immortal Brahman' is this universe. *Purastāt brahma,* 'in front is Brahman'; *paścāt brahma,* 'behind is Brahman'; *dakṣiṇataścottareṇa,* 'on the right as well as left'; *adhaścordhvamca prasṛtam,* 'it is spread above as well as below'. Then finally, a tremendous statement: *brahmaivedam viśvamidam variṣṭham,* 'this *viśvam* or universe is only that supreme divine Brahman'. The *Gītā* teaching, and today, the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda teaching of Advaita, is based upon this idea that the divine is in the heart of all. We have to

worship God by serving people around. We contracted this whole teaching later on. In our *bhakti* religion we saw Brahman only in the temple; outside the temple it is all *samsāra* or worldliness. That is why you find a person going to a temple, cutting grass there with great devotion, because that act has behind it the devotion to the divine, to that image of God that is there. You wash vessels, cut grass there, and when you return, you feel you have done a religious act. But you did not do so to human beings. You limited God only to that particular image. You couldn't feel the presence of God elsewhere. Therefore, you made your religion too narrow, so non-human and, also often, anti-human. That is what had happened to our religious ideas in the past centuries.

That is what is being corrected by Sri Ramakrishna's and Swami Vivekananda's teachings. This wonderful teaching is meant to make for a fulfilled humanity. We are here to reduce people's suffering. Life means also suffering; but there are people to help all such afflicted ones. Then they can bear their suffering better. Go to any village; if people there see that you are there to help them, they will be tremendously encouraged. Nobody has encouraged them. Everybody has gone only to exploit them till now. Go to the tribals, not to exploit them, but let somebody go saying, 'I am here to help you.' But merely saying so won't do. They will suspect you. You have to show by your living there that you are their friend. Once you demonstrate that, you open up their hearts. You are treated as their real friend. So, this kind of attitude must be pervasive in society, East or West. The developed nations, the developing nations, everywhere, we are one. That wonderful Advaitic vision can make for tremendous change in the world today.

The whole world has to be raised. You can't raise only one part of the world. We need a philosophy for it. We need a particular ideology for it. Not mere humanistic jargon; that won't do. That won't make you fully inspired. We must have a basis in truth before our action. That truth is what the philosophy and spirituality of Advaita proclaims. There is only one infinite Self in all. Differences are only on the surface, at the sensory level. Deep down there is perfect unity. You and I are one. Then love alone can come out of your heart. Service alone can come out of your heart. We need a philosophy of human unity, of human service. That philosophy will be very inspiring. Vivekananda preached it, and the world likes to hear it

today. That is why his books are very much in demand even among the people of Soviet Russia today, where they have themselves started a Vivekananda Society. A group of intellectuals and scientists of Soviet Russia have started a Vivekananda Society in Moscow. They feel that the problems afflicting the world today need a philosophy to make it recover from them. A wrong philosophy has brought us to this trouble. A more comprehensive philosophy we need today. And Vedanta is that comprehensive philosophy, *a science of human possibilities,* if I can use the word coined by the late British biologist, Sir Julian Huxley.

So, that is why it is attracting more and more people. It is so rational; you can question, you can turn it upside down. Try to understand it, try to experiment, try to realize it for yourself. And the whole thing is directed not to mere belief but to experience, here, in this very life. It does not give a passport to heaven. Because of that wonderful quality of Advaita as expressed in the Upaniṣads, the *Gītā*, in many parts of *Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and also in the wonderful original message of Buddha, that Advaitic vision out of which alone infinite compassion can come, even to the animals, it should dominate the world situation today. If in the twenty-first century more people understand this truth, this will be really a bright century. Everything is ready, but there is so much of distortion, so much of violence, so much of crime, so many weaknesses of the human mind. This cannot be removed by merely political methods. Even democracy itself can become a mobocracy, as I said earlier. A democracy that condemned Socrates to death in Athens became a mobocracy. The then Athenians couldn't understand the higher levels of life. So, they condemned this great man to death. That made Plato tremendously a hater of democracy. Plato said democracy is absolutely mobocracy. There is nothing high in it. If you want democracy to succeed, this element of ethical, moral and spiritual growth must come to the people. So, in Vedanta you will find, in the context of modern science, modern techniques, modern socio-political processes, this great spiritual orientation given to human life and human development. That appeals to many thinking people all over the world; to increasing number of people, including, as I said, people in the communist countries, to whom all this was anathema till now. Even Indian communists like the C.P.M. in Calcutta,

West Bengal, have started praising Vivekananda recently in one of the articles in their journal. They have never done it before. The world is changing. People are seeking for a guidance, a philosophical guidance. They don't get it from mere political leaders. They can take you up to some distance and not more than that, just like the 18th and 19th century industrial revolution which took the Western nations some steps forward. They abolished poverty and many other things. But so many other evils have come. Some evils have gone. Other evils have come. These evils are deep. For what you see as human distortions in the West today, there is no complete philosophy of life; there are only sectional philosophies. They are all in search of this complete philosophy. That is why the word holistic comes again and again in Western literature today: holistic medicine, holistic life, holistic health, holistic this and holistic that.

So, this is how this subject has become so important today for us in India, and for others elsewhere. And they are in search of it; they are not able to get it so easily; but, they understand things better than our people in India. We are not able to grasp it so much. The past static centuries' pressure is on our minds. We have not yet felt the real problems of life. When that feeling will come, then we will come to this practical Vedanta of the *Gītā*. We are satisfied when we go to a temple and ring the bell, and we feel that we have done everything. A few rituals are enough. That is our present condition. But wait! Life is becoming more complicated, more problems are coming, and the result, as it happened in the West, is that the traditional religious ideas can never make you face up to these challenges. We need something deeper, something strengthening, something heroic. That is what you get here in this great book. A hero's teaching to another hero; that is the *Gītā*.

Arjuna was a hero. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was a still greater hero. And he communicated this message not for any goody-goody purpose of a little bit of cheap religion; that is all what we understand by religion today. The lowest level of religious understanding in India, even among some intellectuals and pandits is: go to Hardwar, catch hold of the tail of a cow, pay five rupees to a priest, and you will go to heaven. That is all of religion to such people. That is the lowest level. So, such cheap ideas are plenty all over India. Even top people will do these things. Some government

ministers will do this often when, in fact, they have plenty of other good things to do—to bring up the millions of common people, to serve the nation, to give people strength, to make them able to carry the nation on their shoulders as its enlightened citizens, etc. The people must be made the centre of democracy. Many of our politicians are fond of the cheap kind of religion. But for doing the work that is given to him or her, and for raising the nation from its sufferings and privations, they don't have the will to do. That is why, in spite of plenty of politics, there is so little human development, human welfare. The cry of distress comes from more and more hearts everyday. So, we have with us Gandhiji's prescription to some people who went to him and asked, 'what shall we do?' He said, 'before you plan to do anything, sit quiet for some time, and ask one question: will, what I plan to do, bring welfare to the weakest person in my country? Then, if you receive proper answer, go ahead with the project.' That is the most important thing today. He said, my life and work will continue till I wipe away the tear from the last sorrowing person. These are beautiful ideas, highly spiritual and truly political. Real politics is what makes a citizen stand on his or her own feet. They must hear the voice: this nation belongs to you; you are the strength of this nation. Today, our politicians want to *use* the people to get power. All political parties are engaged in *using* the people, making use of them as cattle, purchasing their votes for five rupees or hundred rupees. That is where the *Gītā* teaching has to come to help us, to correct our politics and administration. There is so much political strength, democratic strength in its teaching.

In fact, this chapter, the fifth chapter, contains an exposition of the 'philosophy of equality', *samatva, samadarśitva.* We are all one. We have to establish that sense of harmony, that sense of equality, in our country. What a beautiful theme! An ordinary person standing before an extraordinary person, does not feel small; he or she also has some greatness about him or her. This kind of human growth has to come to our nation in this modern age. The philosophy to help you to achieve it is here in this *Gītā* teaching. It is practical Vedanta, practical Advaita. And Vivekananda said, there is no new text book needed for practical Vedanta, because it is already there in its best form in the *Gītā*. So you have the answer Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving: *Tayostu karmasannyāsāt karmayogo viśiṣyate,* 'between the two,

karma yoga is superior to *karma sannyāsa*'. You may have peace of mind, you may be happy. You may be free from all trouble, but does it absolve you from your responsibility to help suffering people around you? They are also in distress. Don't you have a heart? Does not the heart feel for others? What is the use of human life and religion if the heart is completely dry? We unfortunately developed a dried-up heart in our country. Brilliant intellects, dried up hearts. Our hearts have never functioned for centuries together. Generally, we think women have a heart. But even the women's heart became so circumscribed to their own children that it never extended to anybody else. That is what happened to our country. So, Swami Vivekananda said, combine Śaṅkarācārya's intellect with Buddha's infinite heart. Then you will become a great person yourself.

That is the work we have to do in this modern period. Our intellect is bright, but our heart is very very narrow. Why all these evils like bride-burning and other things? All because the heart is not there. The brain is there. Heart is absolutely dead. That is the nature of our human situation. That is why this teaching needs to be converted to practical implementation. Our character must be shaped in the light of this teaching. A new type of humanity has to come up in the light of this teaching. Now Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going one step further. He said that between renunciation of actions through *sannyāsa* and doing actions in the spirit of *karma-yoga,* the second one is better, the second one is more excellent. He now goes still further in the next verse.

ज्ञेयः स नित्यसंन्यासी यो न द्वेष्टि न कांक्षति ।
निर्द्वन्द्वो हि महाबाहो सुखं बन्धात् प्रमुच्यते ॥३॥

Jñeyaḥ sa nityasannyāsī yo na dveṣṭi na kāṅkṣati;
Nirdvandvo hi mahābāho sukham bandhāt pramucyate —5. 3

'He or she should be known a constant *sannyāsī,* who has no personal likes, nor dislikes; for, free from the pairs of opposites, O mighty armed, that person is easily set free from bondage.'

Know that person to be a 'constant *sannyāsi', nityasannyāsī.* Who? *Yo na dveṣṭi na kāṅkṣati,* 'who has no hatred for anybody, and who is not

greedy to possess everything for oneself'. That type of person is a *karma-yogi. Nirdvandvo,* 'free from the pairs of opposites' in society, like good and bad, happiness and misery. *Nirdvandvo hi mahābāho,* 'his or her mind is steady even in the midst of all these dualities'. *Sukham bandhāt pramucyate*, 'he or she gets freed from all bondages easily', when he or she develops this kind of mind. You are in the midst of work, in the midst of problems, but your mind is so trained, so as to be able to remain calm and steady and face all these challenges before you. Such a person is a *nityasannyāsī*, 'a constant *sannyāsi*'; what a beautiful expression! *Sannyāsa* is so great; everybody appreciates *sannyāsa* in India. But what does *sannyāsa* mean? Originally it meant giving up wife and children, or husband and others, and going to the forest and living all alone. They don't cook food, they get it by begging. *Niragni,* 'no handling of fire'; a *sannyāsi* is not expected to cook food for oneself. A Buddhist *sannyāsin* who is called a *bhikṣu,* is not permitted to cook food for himself. Suppose he goes to a house, and the housewife gives him raw rice and vegetables, he will say, 'Sorry.' 'Have you got any cooked food? Just a little?', he will ask. He will not ask also. Generally he will keep quiet. That is the rule for Buddhist monks. So also for Hindu monks. Monks are free from owning things and cooking food for themselves. They only live by begging, and that begging also is done a little from each house. They call it *mādhukari,* a wonderful term they have coined for it. Like a bee that takes honey material from various flowers, never disturbing a single flower, should be the monk who takes his food from seven or eight houses, and not from one house which would be a burden to that family; a small quantity is not a burden. This is the usual idea of *sannyāsa.*

Now, everybody can't be a *sannyāsi.* What about the others? O we are mere householders, that is the attitude. No, you are also a *sannyāsi,* is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to tell everyone. As soon as you develop this quality as given in the verse, you become a *sannyāsi.* Whether you are living at home, or in the market, doing work, it doesn't matter. It is the mind that is a *sannyāsi,* the attitude you have developed. Your work is going on for the good of the world. That will continue. But your mind has become free. *Sukham bandhāt pramucyate,* 'you easily get freed from bondage', what

you call worldly bondage. That is one step further than the previous verse. But that is not enough. The next *śloka* clinches the whole issue.

सांख्ययोगौ पृथग्बाला: प्रवदन्ति न पण्डिता: ।
एकं अपि आस्थित: सम्यक् उभयोर्विन्दते फलम् ॥४॥

Sāṅkhyayogau pṛthagbālāḥ pravadanti na paṇḍitāḥ;
Ekam api āsthitaḥ samyak ubhayorvindate phalam — 5. 4

'Childlike or immature people, not the wise, speak of Self-knowledge and *yoga* of action, as distinct; one who is truly established in one, gains the fruits of both.'

Sāṅkhya and *yoga* are the two paths. Of these two, the path of renunciation of all actions, going into the forest, trying to realize your Atman, was called the *Sāṅkhya* path. In the second chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa had referred to this path, and said there is another path called *yoga, karma-yoga.* Then he says here that, 'these two paths are different,' is said only by people of undeveloped minds. Undeveloped minds are described in the Sanskrit language as *bālāḥ,* 'immature children', babies. That these two are different, 'is babies' talk.' That is the language: *bālāḥ pravadanti, na paṇḍitāḥ,* 'but not by a *paṇḍitā';* those who are highly intelligent and wise, they will never say that these two are different. Why? *Ekam api āsthitaḥ samyak ubhayoḥ vindate phalam,* 'if one is well established in one, he or she reaps the fruits of both'. That is the language. You are doing *karma-yoga,* be well established in it. You are as good as a *sannyāsin* who has renounced everything and gone to the forest. This is the great status that Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives to the householder who lives and works as a *karma-yogī;* the person who has human responsibilities to discharge and works hard. We have completely forgotten this teaching, and one of the most evil things today is a feeling of smallness on the part of our householders: 'I am nothing, I am a *samsāri.* I am only a *gṛhastha.* I am not fit for this and that.' That kind of degradation has come on the human mind. It is extremely bad to lose faith in oneself, and in one's way of life. Have faith in yourself. I may not be a very high householder, but I am a good householder, I carry out my family and social responsibilities properly. In that way, self-confidence must come to the householders who constitute 99.9 per cent of

our population. Śrī Kṛṣṇa wants to infuse that self-confidence, *ātma śraddhā,* in people who have to face challenges, difficulties, and family and social responsibilities. This is the standard Indian idea of the householder. We have come down and fallen far away down from that idea, and we are feeling, 'We are nobody, we are nobody.' I have told our householders here and there to be somewhat more helpful to the weaker sections. But, 'we are only householders, we are not *sannyāsins,*' has been the usual response. I used to exclaim, 'What do you mean? Is it not a joy for you to serve people?' Look up into our *Manu Smṛti.* I often quote that famous law-book in which the *gṛhastha* or householder is given a very high position. There he says, among the four *āśramas—brahmacarya, gṛhastha, vānaprastha,* and *sannyāsa*—the *gṛhastha āśrama* is the 'pre-eminent *āśrama'* (3. 78):

Yasmāt trayo'pyāśramiṇo jñānenānnena cānvaham;
Gṛhasthenaiva dhāryante tasmāt jyeṣṭhāśramo gṛhī —

'Since the *gṛhastha* discharges the responsibility of educating and feeding the other three *āśramas,* the *gṛhastha āśrama* is the pre-eminent *āśrama.*'

A *brahmacārin* does not earn; the *vānaprasthin* also doesn't earn; so also, a *sannyāsi* doesn't earn. Who runs the whole society? This one single group called the *gṛhastha,* the householder. *Tasmāt,* 'therefore', *jyeṣṭhāśramo gṛhī*, '*gṛhastha* is called the *jyeṣṭhāśrama,* pre-eminent *āśrama*'. What a high status is thus given to the householder! But what is the nature of that householder? Its equivalent today is what you call a free and responsible citizen in a democracy. That citizen not only takes care of himself or herself, but takes care of the whole nation. That is where Śrī Kṛṣṇa's philosophy of *yoga* comes in. 'I am a simple *samsāri,* a worldly person, I have no status,' that kind of demeaning attitude is the opposite of the high status given to the householder by our ancient law-giver Manu. Today, our *gṛhasthas* must realize this truth. Whatever can be achieved by the *Sāṅkhya* path of *sannyāsa* and *jñāna*, can be achieved by the *yoga* path of action and day-to-day dedication. This is the language. *Yat sāṅkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānam tadyogairapi gamyate*, 'whatever high state you achieve through *sāṅkhya,* exclusive path of Self-knowledge, that you achieve through *yoga* also.' This statement comes in the *Mahābhārata* and other

places also repeatedly. We have forgotten all this. Why? Because a national decay had set in, the body became weak, mind became weak, and the will became weak; we mistook obstinacy as strong will. We have plenty of obstinacy. Will and obstinacy are not the same. Will can change if you know that it is not correct. Obstinacy can never change. We often mistake obstinacy for will. 'That person has a strong will,' that only means he or she is very obstinate. He or she will never change. If you suggest that the hare he or she has caught has no horns, it has only two ears, the reply will be, 'No! it has got two horns. I am sure, I am sure.' That is the expression of obstinacy in one of our languages. So, strength of will and clarity of thinking make for precision. We lack precision in thinking, speaking and action. Precision, we had destroyed long ago. What can be said in two sentences, we will take two hundred sentences, and yet in the end we do not know what we said. In many lectures you can see, after two hours you do not know what the speaker had said. There is no clarity; there is no precision. Now, these are highly trained intellectual products that our people are achieving slowly. So, today, if we want to develop our nation into a powerful one, we need to change the mind of the people, make it a trained mind, not a stuffed brain. Mostly it is a stuffed brain. Opinions it has in plenty, but not convictions. So, in all our Pañcāyats, Zilla Pariṣads, University Senates, and Assemblies you will find plenty of talk, but as to the work to be done, the action programme, there is very little of it, because the heart is not moved by the surrounding human situation. When you see a man in distress there, you can't go and deliver a lecture to him. You are there to remove his distress. That is the first work you have to do. What *Bhagavān* Buddha told: A man struck by an arrow and suffering from the wound, told a person who went to him. 'Now, tell me who shot this arrow at me? Tell me from what tree was the wood taken to make this arrow?' He went on asking such questions. Buddha took this example. 'By the time he replies to two or three such questions, the patient would die away. Get the arrow removed first,' he said. That is the first thing to be done; remove that arrow. Then you can discuss in plenty the theory of all these things. That is a wonderful example. And we in India need that teaching very much today. People are in distress, people are suffering. Remove that first; then you can have a discussion about other connected matters.

यत्सांख्यैः प्राप्यते स्थानं तद्योगैरपि गम्यते ।
एकं सांख्यं च योगं च यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥५॥

Yatsāṅkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānam tadyogairapi gamyate;
Ekam sāṅkhyam ca yogam ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati — 5. 5

'The goal which is reached by the *jñānis* is also reached by the *karma-yogis*. One who sees *jñāna* and *yoga* as one, alone sees.'

What is *yoga?* What is *Sāṅkhya?* They are really one. There is no difference between the two. That is real understanding. That, in reality, is seeing the truth. This is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here.

So, a householder, who wants to respect the *sannyāsin* who has given up the world and gone on a lonely life, does no harm in respecting such a person, but not at the cost of demeaning oneself. Don't demean yourself, while you respect somebody else. That is the first lesson we have to learn. Our self-respect must be maintained. Then only that respect for the other person has some meaning. But when you find, even in our politics, that people seeking a ministerial post go and touch the feet of a holy person, where is personal dignity? *Gītā* won't allow it. If you want to touch the feet of somebody else, do so, but as a product of your own dignity and self-respect. By doing that you must feel your own dignity enhanced. That can never happen unless the one whose feet you touch is a good person, is endowed with moral values. Then only will you feel dignified; otherwise, you simply go down in self-respect.

Once, I remember, in Chandigarh and in Amritsar, I was addressing the Medical College. The Principal, a Sikh gentleman, was a very fine person, very independent, and always in trouble with the authorities because of his very independent spirit. He did not mind that. I met him again in Kabul, where he was in charge of the children's hospital donated by the Government of India and run entirely by Indian personnel and Indian goods. They took me to that hospital. During that time he heard all lectures which I used to give in Kabul. After a few days, before I left, he came to me and said, 'I don't salute anybody, I am very independent, but I want your permission to bow down to you.' This was the language. I said, 'if by

bowing down to me like that, you feel your own self-respect enhanced, then you may do so; don't do so under any other condition.' He was very happy. He was already a man of tremendous self-respect, he had nothing to lose, so he bowed down and was happy.

Now this is the truth that we must keep in view. Anything that demeans somebody else should not be done; also anything that demeans oneself, should not be done. Let everybody be raised in his or her own self-respect. Then only we can have a healthy human society. The householder and the *sannyāsin* have both a high status in society; it is this idea you get in Swami Vivekananda's famous book *Karma-yoga* composed of some of his lectures delivered in America. Its second chapter is entitled 'Each is Great in His Own Place'. Is a *sannyāsin* greater, or is a *gṛhastha* greater? Each is great in his own place. That is the subject, and a beautiful illustration is given there. In what way is one or the other great? That is what our nation must learn today in a big way.

Then comes a wonderful statement, *ekam sāṅkhyam ca yogam ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati*, '*yoga* and *sāṅkhya* are one and the same.' Renunciation of action and trying to get *samādhi* in some cave or mountain, and doing actions in society in a spirit of *yoga,* with detachment and in a spirit of service and dedication, both these are the same. They lead you to the same goal. What a beautiful idea! This is the central stress in the *Gītā*. In no other book will you find this clarification, and this lifting up of the ordinary human life to such high level; that the highest spirituality can be had *here and now*, in the midst of work, in the midst of struggle, by the mind attuned to that *yoga* attitude.

In the *Hitopadeśa,* second part, there occurs this very luminous verse (*Sandhi*, 90):

Vane'pi doṣā prabhavanti rāgiṇām
gṛheṣu sarvendriya nigrahastapaḥ;
Akutsite karmaṇi yaḥ pravartate
nivṛtta rāgasya gṛham tapovanam —

'Even in the forest, if one has sensory cravings, he or she will have trouble to lead a spiritual life; people with sensory attachment will face evil

problems even when they go to the forest to live there in meditation'. *Gṛheṣu sarvendriya nigrahastapaḥ*, 'but, remaining at home with disciplined sense organs is *tapas*'. Then, *akutsite karmaṇi yaḥ pravartate nivṛtta rāgasya gṛham tapovanam;* a very definite statement. *Akutsite karmaṇi yaḥ pravartate,* 'those who are engaged in blameless deeds'; *nivṛtta rāgasya*, 'those who are free from sensory attachments'; *gṛham tapovanam,* 'his or her own home becomes a forest retreat. The *gṛham,* a home, gets transformed into a *tapovanam,* a forest retreat.'

This tremendous emphasis is on not where you stay, but how you train your mind, how you shape it. You can do it here, or you can do it there. In fact, when you do it here, it is more successful, because in the midst of challenges you are strengthening the mind. If there is no challenge, there is nothing to strengthen. If the mind is not distracted by anything, there is no challenge to the mind. What you achieve is poor.

However, in the midst of challenges if you are able to pacify the mind, then it is wonderful. It is just like this: *Sannyāsins* do not carry money, that is the rule. Swami Vivekananda travelled all over India without touching money. That was the old system—without ever touching money, you have developed detachment for money. But, while handling money can you still be detached? That is a much greater achievement. A bank officer has to deal with crores of rupees. It passes through his hands. It doesn't stick there. But very often it sticks! And that is called corruption. But, the rule is, you pass it on, it is not yours, it belongs to the public. You are only handling it. That is also true with regard to a spiritual householder. He or she is only handling the money in a spirit of detachment. And, if one can do so, he or she is better than the one who says, 'I don't touch money, therefore, I am clean and pure.' You are handling money and still you are keeping clean and pure. What a beautiful idea! More challenges are there before you. You overcome them. Now these ideas come again and again in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Mahābhārata* and in the *Gītā* also.

This is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is stressing because everyone can rise to the highest spiritual level. One has only to take into account this particular subject in the midst of one's day-to-day activities. He or she should not get

lost in the day-to-day activities, pleasures, and comforts, forgetting to train one's mind to rise higher and higher. There are higher levels to attain.

So, the one clarion call of the Vedanta to every spiritual seeker is, *don't stagnate at the physical level, at the sensory level.* That is animal life. Human beings have the capacity to go beyond this level. So, continue to march on; don't stagnate. That is its only message; it doesn't condemn sensory life; it doesn't condemn our day-to-day actions for earning money, for running our households; not at all. There is no place for the devil in the whole of Vedanta. We are all great, we are all good, but don't stagnate. Stagnation alone is called *samsāra.* Don't be a *samsāri*; when you stagnate at the sensate level, then you are a *samsāri.* Otherwise, you are in *samsāra,* you are struggling, you are developing; just like a baby, interested only in eating, drinking, and comfort, slowly develops a desire for knowledge, goes to school, reads books, and progresses to higher levels of seeking knowledge and excellence. In that kind of life's march, you also find a stage where you go beyond sensory limitations, beyond all this *samsāra,* or stagnant sensory life. Then you begin to realize your own true nature and the tremendous possibilities hidden within you. God Himself is hidden within you, that knowledge will come to you.

The whole of that process is called tapas. That *tapas* can be done in the context of household life itself. It doesn't mean a dry asceticism; not at all. You are enjoying your day-to-day life, you have contact with society, you can smile, you can enjoy everything. But you are not stagnant at that level. You are going higher and higher. Even if you are an educated person, you can play with children with toys; there is no harm. You are encouraging the children thereby, so that you never become an ascetic of the dry type. Sri Ramakrishna always said, 'Don't be a dry ascetic. O Divine Mother, don't make me a dry ascetic.' That kind of asceticism, which we usually associated earlier with a very dry face, not even a smile, not even pleased to see a baby in front, that kind of asceticism has no place in Vedanta. Don't become a dried up ascetic. That is where this teaching has a tremendous significance. March on, march on, don't stagnate, don't stagnate. There are so many heights to conquer.

That is the clarion call of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (I. iii. 14): *Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata*, 'arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached', as freely rendered by Swami Vivekananda. That goal is perfect realization of the divine hidden in all of us. And the divine in me is also the divine in you. There is only one divine, undivided, existing in apparently divided existences. That is the language of the *Gītā* in a later chapter (13. 16, *see also* 18. 20): *Avibhaktam ca bhūteṣu vibhaktam iva ca sthitam,* 'that infinite Atman is one and undivided, *avibhaktam*, but it appears to be divided in you, in me, in all'. This knowledge then comes to you, 'that I am one with all. I am the infinite Atman'. Just as space is undivided, even though it becomes apparently divided by raising a wall in it. Space itself does not know this limitation. That is why the Atman is compared to space. What a beautiful illustration! Space is ever clear, ever pure; nothing can taint it. The Atman is also the same. So, *ākāśa* becomes a symbol of the Atman in the Upaniṣads. It has all these qualities except consciousness. If consciousness is added to *ākāśa,* it is Brahman. So, in many places you find mentioned, Brahman is *ākāśa, ākāśa* is Brahman.

Vedanta prescribes short-term ideals and long-term ideals. In economic development, we have five-year plans; but in life, we need to have that as well as five hundred year plans. What type of human being is coming out of all these plans? Ask that question. Is he or she going to be selfish, money-mad and corrupt? Then the five-year plan will be dangerous for any nation. We need to develop decent human beings inspired by ethical values, humanistic values, who love other people, who try to lift up common people—that is the long-range plan. Now that is the subject which is going on all through this *Gītā*. And the *Gītā* says that it is the birthright of one and all, all over the world. Today or tomorrow, you will reach the end of this great struggle, this great adventure, and become free, here and now, in this very world. You may have to pass through many births; it doesn't matter. But you must feel that you are on the way. What are births and deaths in this spiritual adventure? Merely punctuations. Just like when you write a sentence, you put a comma, put a semi-colon, but no full stop. Full stop is where everything ends. That is *mokṣa,* absolute spiritual freedom. Till then it is a continuous march. I am in that great line of pilgrims towards that

highest spiritual realization. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling in the next verse, the verse which we shall now study, verse 6:

संन्यासस्तु महाबाहो दुःखं आप्तुं अयोगतः ।
योगयुक्तो मुनिः ब्रह्म नचिरेण अधिगच्छति ॥६॥

Sannyāsastu mahābāho duḥkham āptum ayogataḥ;
Yogayukto muniḥ brahma nacireṇa adhigacchati — 5. 6

'Renunciation of action, O mighty-armed, is hard to attain by one who has not passed through the *yoga* of action; the meditative person, purified by the *yoga* of action, quickly attains Brahman.'

Real *sannyāsa*, renunciation of action, cannot come without perfection in *yoga, karma-yoga.* That is the language. Real *sannyāsa*! Fake *sannyāsa* you can have, but real *sannyāsa* cannot come. *Duḥkham āptum,* 'is difficult to achieve'; *ayogataḥ,* 'for one who has not been disciplined in *yoga*'. First, discipline in *yoga.* Then you will know how to renounce your actions. That renunciation will be a spiritual renunciation, not a physical renunciation. Without fulfilling your citizenship responsibilities, how can you have real *sannyāsa*? You have a responsibility to the society. Never forget it. As Swami Vivekananda said using two terms, 'manhood' and 'sainthood': 'don't try to become a saint before you become a man in the true sense of the term.' Sainthood raised on manhood will be genuine. Sainthood without the manhood below will be fake sainthood. And in this country, we have been after that for centuries together. Fake sainthood; put on a dress, you become a saint. But here it is different. You have worked hard, you have struggled, developed high character, helped people, you have discharged your citizenship responsibilities. Then you will become a real saint. Develop this 'I', expand it, feel one with all. That is the first stage of human development. And the last stage is, renounce that 'I' once for all. God alone is, there is no 'I' at all. So, renouncing the 'I' cannot come without training the 'I' and strengthening it; otherwise, it will be a fake renunciation.

Swami Vivekananda said regarding some of our people: everybody wants to be a saint in India, nobody wants to be a man in India with good human relationship with others. He said, "a poor man comes to me saying,

‘Swamiji, I want to renounce the world’. I ask him, ‘What have you to renounce? Neither a strong body, nor a trained mind, nor money in the pocket. What will you renounce? Have something to renounce. When you have something to renounce, that renunciation is genuine.’” Therefore, the language here is, *sannyāsastu mahābāho duḥkham āptum ayogataḥ*, ‘without this training in *yoga,* i.e. *karma-yoga,* by which one develops character efficiency and public spirit, spirit of service and dedication, none can achieve real *sannyāsa*.’

Bhāsa was a great poet like Kālidāsa. In his book *Avimāra,* chapter 5, verse 5, there is a very beautiful verse.

Prājñasya mūrkhasya ca kāryayoge
samatvam abhyeti tanuḥ na buddhiḥ —

‘If a wise person and a fool are working, when we look at them at work, they do look the same; but in their minds they are different.’

As I said in the Andhra Government Secretariat lecture in Hyderabad two or three years ago, ‘Do a clerk’s work, not with a clerk’s mind but with the mind of a citizen of free India.’ In all departments this applies. The work becomes great, when done by a great mind. The work becomes small, when done by a small mind. It is not work that is great, it is the mind that is behind the work that makes it great. The mother cooks food for you, and the paid cook also cooks food for you. Cooking is the same, but the mind is so different between the one and the other. So, that is the most important thing so far as human beings are concerned. *Karma-yoga* deals with that subject. How to make this mind rich? How to make this mind pure? How to make this mind unlimited? That is the work we have to do. How, in the context of work itself, you are handling the mind? Normally, nobody cares to do so. When we are working, we are busy with the work. We neglect the mind. But, no. This work is meant to educate you, to train you.

What a wonderful thing it is! Work as a centre of education is a very important thing. It is not only reading books that is education. But the work that you do, the human relations that you have, they are all centres of education for you. That is how you grow. That makes for total education. We at once mark that this is meant for all—for children, for grown ups, for

people in East or West, for atheists, agnostics, religious people, for all. As a human being how do you grow? How do you bring out the possibilities hidden within you? That subject must engage your mind. Then turn to the *Gītā* and you will find the guidance. Turn your life situation into a tremendous all-round education for yourself—physical, intellectual, spiritual and social. All education will come to you, provided you know how to manipulate your work and life situation. Let not the situation manipulate you. You manipulate your life and work situation. Then only you are free. Otherwise, you are an animal. An animal never manipulates its life situation. Life situation manipulates the animal. The bull is yoked to the plough; what has he to do? He goes on working till somebody stops it. In the case of the human being, he or she does all work, but he or she also does something more. He or she is training the mind, shaping one's inner life to make it richer, and going deeper into oneself to realize one's own infinite ever-free nature. That is how a big human being comes out of a puny human being. We have to build up our higher personality on the given personality.

That is what true education means, which is not confined to school and college or an institution, but life itself is the centre for that education. That is the real teaching of the *Gītā*. You erect yourself above yourself. This is a raw product. You have to process it, and something beautiful will come out of it. This human body-mind complex, when we are young, is a raw material. We have to transform it. But the whole transformation process is education, of which, religion understood as spiritual development, is only a higher part. But it is a continuous education. That is everybody's privilege and responsibility. If one neglects it, remains stagnant at a lower level, at the animal level, it is a matter of tragedy. All tragedies come from that kind of life. In all literature you can find tragedies centred on the human being who has become stagnant at the organic level. That should not be. Be great. Try to expand, grow. The word is expansion, growth; in Sanskrit we call it *vikāsa, ātmavikāsa.* Have I grown, have I spiritually expanded? That is the question each has to ask oneself. Physical expansion, strength of body; then mental expansion, strength of knowledge; and spiritual expansion, realizing our own infinite nature, feeling one with all. What a beautiful society will come when majority of people will be on that path of expansion from the

physical to the spiritual. That will be a really well-developed society. 'Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to Truth or die,' is a sentence in Swami Vivekananda's lectures in London. (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 2, p. 84)

Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

योगयुक्तो विशुद्धात्मा विजितात्मा जितेन्द्रियः ।
सर्वभूतात्मभूतात्मा कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यते ॥७॥

Yogayukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ;
Sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā kurvannapi na lipyate — 5. 7

'With the mind purified by devotion to performance of action in the spirit of *yoga*, and the body conquered, and sense organs subdued, one who realizes one's self, as the Self in all beings, though acting, is not tainted.'

Yogayukto, 'one who is well established in this *karma-yoga*'; *viśuddhātmā,* 'pure in mind'; *vijitātmā,* 'who has conquered the body'; and *jitendriyaḥ,* 'who has conquered one's sensory energy system'. Such a person who has used one's life situation to achieve these, *sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā,* 'one who feels oneself spiritually one with all does not feel that he or she is being confined to his or her tiny organic system; he or she becomes expanded and feels one with all, being one with that infinite Self'. *Sarvabhūtātmabhūtāmā,* the language is *sarva;* it means all. Till now you were an isolated individual. With a little development of spirituality, one feels one's oneness with *others*, feels the desire to serve people and becomes, in its early stages, a good citizen. But its highest expansion comes, when one feels oneness with *all*. The sufferings and joys of all others become one's own sufferings and joys. There is only one infinite Atman; one realizes that truth. *Sarva bhūtātma bhūtātmā,* such a person, *kurvannapi na lipyate,* 'even though he or she is constantly performing actions, he or she will never be tainted'. That person is unique. The whole human evolution is seen by Vedanta to be in that direction. From the particular to the universal is the direction of human evolution. A baby begins its life by completely identifying itself with its body. It cannot think of anything else. It wants to protect its body. It wants to get the warmth of

its mother's body and the touch of the skin of its mother's body. Mother's skin touch is very important for a baby, for its feeling of security and development. For a baby it is quite alright. But it should not remain in that state for long. As it grows, it knows how to detach itself from its body, how to grow, how to respect and love other people; all these expansions come.

What is the nature of that expansion? Psychic expansion. Actually, it is a spiritual expansion, *adhyātma vikāsa,* through the psychic system. A good citizen has spiritually expanded; he or she can feel the suffering of fellow countrymen; and it finds expression in the feeling, 'I have to go and help them'. That is called citizenship in a limited nationalistic sense; today, it refers to citizenship of the whole world. The entire world is one; we call it today the humankind awareness. In all these matters, when you go beyond your own ego, your own organic limitation, you expand your sense of 'I'. That first stage of expansion is social awareness, a concern for others. That is spiritual expansion, and this when you continue further and further, it becomes *sarva bhūtātma bhūtātmā,* 'I am the Self of all beings'. It is an extraordinary development; a few only—a Jesus or a Buddha—have realized this kind of highest unity with all. Their compassion had this as the base. Śiva, in our literature, is of this nature. He is one with all. He is full of compassion. And so, *kurvannapi na lipyate,* 'even though one is working, one will not be tainted'. Mind is pure; that is how one will experience more and more of this as one proceeds in this direction. Then, this is explained in detail in the next two verses.

नैव किञ्चित् करोमीति युक्तो मन्येत तत्त्ववित् ।
पश्यन् शृण्वन् स्पृशन् जिघ्रन् अश्नन् गच्छन् स्वपन् श्वसन् ॥८॥

प्रलपन् विसृजन् गृह्णन् उन्मिषन् निमिषन् अपि ।
इन्द्रियाणि इन्द्रियार्थेषु वर्तन्त इति धारयन् ॥९॥

Naiva kiñcit karomīti yukto manyeta tattvavit;
Paśyan śṛṇvan spṛśan jighran aśnan gacchan svapan śvasan—5. 8

Pralapan visṛjan gṛhṇan unmiṣan nimiṣan api;
Indriyāṇi indriyārtheṣu vartanta iti dhārayan — 5. 9

‘The knower of Truth, (being) centred (in the Self) should think, “I do nothing at all”—though seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, sleeping, breathing, speaking, letting go, holding, opening and closing the eyes—convinced that it is all the senses that move among sense objects.’

Naiva kiñcit karomīti yukto manyeta tattvavit, ‘the knower of Truth, *tattvavit,* must think like this: “I do not do anything”’. Though a lot of work is being done, *I* am not doing anything. *Yukto*, ‘a *yogī*’*; manyeta tattvavit,* ‘a knower of Truth must think like this’ in regard to what all things he or she is doing. What are the things included in such doing? Everything. So, in three lines *Gītā* gives a sample. What is that? *Paśyan,* ‘seeing’, *śṛṇvan,* ‘hearing’, *spṛśan,* ‘touching’, *jighran,* ‘smelling’, *aśnan,* ‘eating’, *gacchan,* ‘going’, *svapan,* ‘sleeping’, *śvasan,* ‘breathing’, *pralapan,* ‘speaking’, *visṛjan,* ‘letting go’, *gṛhṇan,* ‘holding’, *unmiṣan,* ‘opening (the eyes)’, *nimiṣan,* ‘closing the eyes’, *api; indriyāṇi indriyārtheṣu vartanta iti dhārayan,* ‘thinking that the sense organs are functioning among the sense objects’, being fully convinced that ‘I do nothing at all’. One gets the capacity to detach from, and the capacity to attach to the sense objects, with a free mind. This double capacity must come to each one: the capacity to attach, and the capacity to detach. That is called freedom. If only one is there, it is not freedom. If both are there, there is freedom. So, here is a senior man in the house, he is very detached, but he can play with children, he can talk with people, he can enjoy everything, and yet essentially he is detached and free. That is called a fuller life. Otherwise, merely an ascetic attitude that, ‘I am free, I am detached,’ but cannot smile when others are smiling, that is not true freedom. It has gone into another type of stagnation. So here is that, *yogayukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā kurvannapi na lipyate,* ‘though working you are not tainted by that work’. *Lepana* means ‘taint’ or some dirt attached to the body. The human being has the capacity to separate the Self from the sensory functions. That is the experience of freedom. We begin our spiritual growth from that level. The capacity to detach from the sensory system. No animal can do it, including a chimpanzee. And because the human being developed that capacity even a little, he or she is also able to dominate animals. This is what neurology says. Once I referred to it in Gray Walter’s book: *The Living Brain*—capacity for image making or imagination. Before

you act, you can picture to your mind the situation and *then* act. And you can change one action to another in imagination, before you actually act externally. This capacity only the human being has, and with that the human being dominates all nature. Gray Walter says: 'If you don't accept what I say, I will only ask you, suppose the tiger or the lion develops this capacity. What would be the result? We won't be here to answer that question.' Any animal that develops this capacity will dominate. That is the power of imagination. Detaching from the sensory system, and studying what is what, then reacting in an original way; it is not merely as an action-reaction programme, which is the normal way. Here between input and output, imagination intervenes. That makes a lot of difference. There you find the initial appearance of detachment. But it has to be developed further and further. Most people do not go beyond that; that is why they suffer. So, all that idea comes here in this wonderful statement. *Kurvannapi na lipyate,* 'even though you are working, you are not at all tainted by the work or its results'. And the next *śloka* is a consummation of all this that we have studied so far in this chapter.

ब्रह्मण्याधाय कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा करोति यः ।
लिप्यते न स पापेन पद्मपत्रं इवाम्भसा ॥१०॥

Brahmaṇyādhāya karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā karoti yaḥ;
Lipyate na sa pāpena padmapatram ivāmbhasā — 5. 10

'One who does actions forsaking attachment, resigning them to Brahman, is not tainted by evil, like a lotus-leaf by water.'

This is a well-known verse of this chapter. *Brahmaṇyādhāya karmāṇi*, 'offering all actions to Brahman'. In the 24th *śloka* of the fourth chapter, we had read what we use as a prayer during meals:

Brahmārpaṇam brahma haviḥ brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam;
Brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahmakarma samādhinā —

'The offering, the fire, the human being who offers, the result of the offering, everything is Brahman.'

That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said there. Here the tenth verse says, let all your actions go to Brahman. Everything has come from Brahman, from that

one infinite spiritual Source. Everything has to be given back to Brahman. *Brahmaṇyādhāya karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā*, 'renouncing all attachment and offering all actions to Brahman'; *karoti yaḥ*, 'one who does so'; *lipyate na sa pāpena*, 'is never touched by sin'; *padmapatram iva ambhasā*, 'like a lotus leaf which is in water but is not touched by water at all'. That is a very famous example in all our literature. *Padmapatram iva ambhasā; ambhas* means water, *padma* means lotus, *patram* is leaf. So, a lotus leaf is never wet though it is always in water. Take it out, all water is gone. Similarly, this human being is in the midst of heavy work. Work doesn't touch him or her, doesn't taint such a one. What a beautiful idea! Anybody can try and realize for oneself whether this is true or not. These are all verifiable truths. Therefore, it is a science; a science of human being in depth. Anything that you can verify is scientific. A mere belief, without subjecting it to verification, cannot be science. Belief, when verified, then it is true, scientifically true. So, the *Gītā* teaches many truths about the human being, which are verified and verifiable. Some people have verified it before. And it is placed before you not for your belief, but for your verification. Try and see, one step, two steps, how far you are able to verify this particular truth. So, *brahmaṇyādhāya karmāṇi,* 'renouncing all actions in Brahman'; *saṅgam tyaktvā karoti yaḥ,* 'one who does work renouncing attachment'; *lipyate na sa pāpena*, 'such a person is never touched by sin'; *padmapatram iva ambhasā*, 'like a lotus leaf by water'. That is a great state of mind. That is the nature of this wonderful spiritual realization. This famous verse 10 is capped by the next verse, verse 11.

कायेन मनसा बुद्ध्या केवलैरिन्द्रियैरपि ।
योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति सङ्गं त्यत्तक्त्वात्मशुद्धये ॥११॥

Kāyena manasā buddhyā kevalairindriyairapi;
Yoginaḥ karma kurvanti saṅgam tyaktvātmaśuddhaye —5. 11

'Following the *yoga* of work, *yogis* perform action only with body, mind, senses and intellect, forsaking attachment, for the purification of the heart.'

'*Yogis* perform work', *yoginaḥ karma kurvanti; saṅgam tyaktvā,* 'giving up attachment'; *ātmaśuddhaye,* 'to purify the inner life'. This is the stress.

Increased productivity is one aspect of work; inner purification is the other aspect of work. Śrī Kṛṣṇa had defined his message of *yoga* thus in the second chapter, verse 50. What kind of actions are referred to here? *Kāyena,* 'by the body'; *manasā ,*'by reason', by exercising reason; and *buddhyā*, 'by the discriminative faculty'; not only so, *kevalairindriyairapi,* 'even ordinarily by the senses also'. The objective is *ātma-śuddhaye,* 'to purify the inner life', so that he or she can manifest one's divine nature. The divine nature is always there. Nobody can destroy it. This is the indestructible nature of the human being, the infinite Atman. That is the most inspiring message of Vedanta. The Atman is always pure, ever free, ever awakened. But in our day-to-day life, we neglect it; we are busy with the sensory world and the sensory reactions. The Atman is always there, neglected all the time. Now, no more neglect. 'I am going to recognize the profound dimension of my personality.' This is the constant stress in Vedanta. Even now, when I am ignorant of the Truth, the Truth is there. Ignorance doesn't abolish the Truth. Remember that expression in a scientific language: ignorance doesn't abolish the Truth. Even in civil life we say, ignorance of law is no excuse. You committed a crime against law. If you say, 'I didn't know that law,' it doesn't matter. Pay for that action that you did. So, in this way, there are profound truths about the human being. The profoundest is that you are the eternal Atman, ever-free, ever-pure, ever-awakened. Śaṅkarācārya puts this sentence in a fine place in his commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras: Nityaśuddha, nityabuddha, nityamukta, paramātman. Nityaśuddha* means ever-pure. Whatever impurities you may have, do not affect the Atman; they affect only the body, the senses and the mind. Never beyond that. So, *nityaśuddha*, 'ever-pure', and *nityabuddha,* 'ever-awakened', just like the sun, ever bright; a little cloud covering it temporarily does not affect the sun. Then *nityamukta,* 'ever-free'. I don't experience it, because I have not thought about it. I have not worked towards it. I have forgotten it. That is what we are doing. But your true nature is this. In no other literature will you find proclaimed this high status of the human being. Even in the state of ignorance, even in the state of bondage, you are ever-free, you are ever-illumined; that is your true nature. Let people realize this truth even a little; how great will life be then!

Śaṅkara's commentary in the first chapter of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* contains a profound statement: *Prāk brahma vijñānād api sarvo jantuḥ brahmatvāt sarva bhāvāpannaḥ paramārtataḥ*, 'even before the realization of Brahman, every being is Brahman and therefore he or she is one with all.' Even before realization of Brahman, you are that Brahman. That is the nature of truth. The Upaniṣads will constantly say, 'You are That, you are That, *tat tvam asi, tat tvam asi*'. According to some of the modern scientists as well, this is a profound truth about the human being. You are free, you are free. If you are not free, you can never become free. You can't become what you are not. You have only forgotten this truth about yourself, only neglected it. Don't neglect it, don't forget it. Work towards it. That is the special emphasis in Vedanta, and in Vedanta alone you will find it. This tremendous statement, 'I am essentially free', we studied in the last seven verses of the third chapter, where it was said that evil and sin affect only the body, the senses, and the mind, but never the Atman. And so, try to manifest the Atman and overcome the evil that has afflicted your body, mind and sensory system. That salvation or liberation is built into yourself. You needn't depend upon anybody else for it or go to any far away heaven to attain it. The last verse in the third chapter said:

Evam buddheḥ param buddhvā samstabhyātmānam ātmanā;
Jahi śatrum mahābāho kāmarūpam durāsadam —

'Thus realizing the Atman beyond the *buddhi,* and controlling the rest of the body-mind system, overcome this enemy of lust which is difficult to conquer'. This is the great message given in the third chapter to all human beings.

So, in this fifth chapter, we have seen that with the mind, with the senses, with the body, great sages do work. A *karma-yogi* does the work, but he does it to purify oneself so that this Atman can find manifestation. Opaque, translucent and transparent are the covers that are covering us from the Atman. Swami Vivekananda defines religion as the manifestation of the divinity already in the human being. A matchstick contains fire; but touch it, it is cool; and strike it on the matchbox, fire comes out. But the matchstick must be dry. If it be wet, any amount of striking will not bring out the fire. So, certain conditions are to be satisfied for the divine to manifest itself. Those conditions are what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling here. Therefore, it is the privilege of every human being to manifest this divine within. That is the sole purpose of religion. Man realizes one's own true nature, manifests it, and lives a life based upon that realization. Everything is here and now. Not going to some heaven in some particular place, here or there. Not at all. It is all *here and now*. In this chapter, a few verses later, you will get that word, *ihaiva,* 'here itself'. It is attained here itself. What can be more rational, what can be more practical, what can be more universal, than this message?

Even yesterday, a young man had come. His parents refused to take him back home, because he married somebody. He needs their help now. But they wouldn't help him. So, you can see the result of attachment, blinding one and narrowing one's area of sympathy. But Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches only detachment. Love can flow from you when you are truly detached. That lesson we have to learn in a big way. Then everybody becomes free. Nobody is a slave to somebody else. What a beautiful idea of life is this—being free. *Saṅgam tyaktvā,* 'forsaking attachment,' they had to perform actions with the body, the senses, the mind, the *buddhi,* for what purpose? *Ātma śuddhaye,* 'to purify oneself'. With this pure mind only can we realize

Truth. Let us purify our minds. The mind is the only instrument we have, to deal with the world or for dealing with spiritual life. Keep that mind fresh, pure, strong. That is the one great lesson Vedanta emphasizes again and again. I have said before, how every day, in every action, in every human situation, we can train this mind to become freer, purer, nobler. That is how life has to be utilized, so that we don't become a squeezed orange at the end of life. We become full, we become fulfilled in the true sense of the term. Now we come to the next verse.

युक्तः कर्मफलं त्यक्त्वा शान्तिमाप्नोति नैष्ठिकीम् ।
अयुक्तः कामकारेण फले सक्तो निबध्यते ॥१२॥

Yuktaḥ karmaphalam tyaktvā śāntim āpnoti naiṣṭhikīm;
Ayuktaḥ kāmakāreṇa phale sakto nibadhyate — 5. 12

'The well-poised one, forsaking the fruit of action, attains peace, born of steadfastness; the unbalanced one, led by desire, is bound by being attached to the fruits (of action).'

Two types of people are mentioned: the *yuktaḥ* and the *ayuktaḥ.* Those who have entered the path of *yoga,* of inner discipline to realize the Truth that is hidden, such people are called *yuktaḥ.* The other people are called *ayuktaḥ.* So, how does a *yuktaḥ* fare in this path? *Yuktaḥ karmaphalam tyaktvā*, 'the *yogī,* renouncing the fruits of action'; *śāntim āpnoti naiṣṭhikīm*, 'attains peace through such a methodical process'. The other one, *ayuktaḥ kāmkāreṇa*, 'the non-*yogī,* impelled by sensory pulls and desires'; *phale sakto*, 'getting attached to the fruits of actions'; *nibadhyate*, 'becomes bound'. So, two types of people are there: the free and the bound. Nobody can be forced to choose either of these paths. We can see these two types in the world. But the second type, *ayogī, ayuktaḥ,* have increased all over the world, increased in India also. *Karmaphale sakto,* 'attached to the fruits of action'; *nibadhyate,* 'becomes bound'. He or she doesn't realize that he or she is bound. That is the tragedy. Those who are bound do not realize that they are bound. If they realize it, then only they will try to change from that state of bondage. But they are happy with that bondage. They think this is the normal way. Many people today belong to this category.

In one of his very beautiful parables, Sri Ramakrishna illumines this subject. There are four types of human beings, Sri Ramakrishna said: *baddha, mumukṣu, mukta, nityamukta. Baddha* means the bound. *Mumukṣu* means bound, but struggling to be free. That is the second type. Then, *mukta,* free. By his or her struggle, he or she has achieved freedom. And the fourth category is *nityamukta,* the ever-free, never even once got into bondage. These are the four types. And Sri Ramakrishna gives an illustration. When fishermen cast their nets into the lake to catch fish, many fishes are clever enough never to be caught in the net. They are the *nityamuktas,* Sri Ramakrishna said, the ever-free. But quite a good number are caught. Among these, some struggle to get out. They know that they have been caught in some net. So, you can see the fish struggling to get out. The struggling one is called *mumukṣu,* 'one desiring to become free'. Among many who struggle, a few fishes escape out of the net, and the fishermen will sadly exclaim, 'O those are gone!' That is the *mukta,* free type. But, continues Sri Ramakrishna, there is one set of fish, who never feel that they are in bondage. They bite the net, and peacefully live under the mud, thinking they are safe. But, within a few moment, they would be taken away by the fishermen and sold away in the market. They are called the *baddha,* 'the bound', the first type in the list. These are the four types of human beings: *baddha, mumukṣu, mukta, nityamukta.* Pointing to Narendranath, the later Vivekananda, sitting there, Sri Ramakrishna said that he belongs to the *nityamukta* class. *Māyā* could not catch him. He is ever free. The Divine Mother casts Her net of *Māyā* to catch people. She could catch all people in Her net but not these few, those who are eternally free. And others belong to those whom She has caught in the net; some of them struggle to get out of the net of *Māyā;* and that is the sign of spiritual life.

That is a very illumining parable to deal with this subject of this *yuktaḥ* and *ayuktaḥ. Yuktaḥ karmaphalam tyaktvā śāntim āpnoti naiṣṭhikīm,* 'the *yogī* achieves real peace of mind, because of his or her renouncing the fruit of actions'; whereas the *ayuktaḥ,* the attached one, *kāmakāreṇa*, 'because he or she is carried away by sensory desires'; *phale sakto*, 'being attached to the fruit of actions'; *nibadhyate,* 'is bound'. His vision is short, he can see only a few feet ahead; what you call in English, 'he is under the tyranny of

the immediate present'. This type of people, when they increase in a society, that society goes down. All values disappear from that society. We are passing through that state in our country now. It is this we have to reverse. If the *Gītā* becomes universally understood, and a struggle issues in us to live according to it, more and more people will come to that free state, that *yogi* state. We have to create more such *yogis* in our society, not *yogis* who have renounced actions and live in the Himalayas; a minority of such ascetics is an asset, but a majority of such in any society will lead to decay. Citizenship itself is a type of *yoga.* The *citizen-yogī* is more important today. We need millions of *citizen-yogīs*. That is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa has given this kind of classification. They work, they run institutions, they run organizations. They work in factories, offices, everywhere. But their mind is being trained to pursue the path of *yoga.* Through all this they are advancing step by step towards their own spiritual goal and fulfilment. That is the type of humanity on the march, a productive march outward and an inward march towards the divine that is within all. This is the type that can create great culture, that can create great integration and harmony in society; less of crime, less of delinquency, less of exploitation you will have in society when this type of people increase. That is called real social progress. We have made a big mistake in evaluating social progress only in terms of better food, better dress, better conveyances, better houses, better this and better that. What about better men and women? We rarely consider that. As the British poet, Oliver Goldsmith, said in the 18th century England:

> Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay.

Wealth has accumulated in India. Plenty of money, here, there, mostly black money. But the real progress of the nation can be brought about only by education, and not by wealth. Men and women endowed with the humanistic impulse and the spirit of service alone can have the right type of education. The *śloka* that you recite in the beginning of each lecture refers to this necessity of making education the source of our all round progress: *saha vīryam karavāvahai*, 'let us get energy out of our education'. Not only so, *tejasvi nau adhītam astu,* 'let us become illumined as a result of this study'. So, energy and illumination, both must come through education.

Then only, a nation becomes great. Therefore, these ideas have intimate relevance to our life today. Something has gone wrong. Humanity has lost its way. It has to be brought back to the correct way. Then advance, go ahead. *Uttiṣṭhata, jāgrata,* 'arise, awake' of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad;* once awakened then every one can say this oneself. Swami Vivekananda spoke of India as this great national ship, in his Madras lecture on 'My Plan of Campaign' (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 3, p. 227):

'This national ship has been ferrying millions and millions of souls across the waters of life. For scores of shining centuries it has been plying across this water, and through its agency, millions of souls have been taken to the other shore, to blessedness. But today, …this boat has become a little damaged, has sprung a leak; and would you therefore curse it? Is it fit that you stand up and pronounce malediction upon it, one that has done more work than any other thing in the world? If there are holes in this national ship, this society of ours, we are its children. Let us go and stop the holes. Let us gladly do it with our hearts' blood; and if we cannot, then let us die. We will make a plug of our brains and put them into the ship, but condemn it never.'

That is how he ends that great Madras lecture nearly a hundred years ago, in 1897. What far-sight he had, to see the new developments that will come, and how to guide it in the right direction; the *Gītā* gives us that philosophy of action, of endeavour, of collective life. How to build up a new India, stronger, purer than what we inherited from the past? So,

सर्वकर्माणि मनसा संन्यस्यास्ते सुखं वशी ।
नवद्वारे पुरे देही नैव कुर्वन्न कारयन् ॥१३॥

Sarvakarmāṇi manasā sannyasyāste sukham vaśī;
Navadvāre pure dehī naiva kurvan na kārayan — 5. 13

'The subduer (of the senses), having renounced all actions by discrimination, rests happily in the city of the nine gates, neither acting, nor causing (others) to act.'

Sarvakarmāṇi manasā sannyasya, 'renouncing all actions mentally', actually you are doing many actions, but mentally you renounce all these

actions. That is the meaning of detachment. When you detach, you renounce actions mentally and yet you are working. You are doing everything. *Āste,* 'he or she remains'; *sukham,* 'very happily'; *vaśī,* 'the self-controlled one'. 'My senses are under my control;' that person is called a *vaśī.* Every human being must be a *vaśī.* Animals alone are not *vaśī.* We have control over our senses to some extent. We have to increase it a little more so that we know when to say 'yes' and when not to say so. This kind of discrimination comes to us by training. Such a person remains *sukham*, 'happily without tension, without peacelessness'. Where? In this body. He or she remains in this body. How? *Navadvāre pure dehī naiva kurvan na kārayan*, 'neither acting nor making others act, he or she remains within this body of nine gateways'; the body is compared to a city with 'nine gateways', *navadvāra;* such a city is the human body in which this Self is living, absolutely peaceful, doing all the work; no tension, no fear, no unfulfilment. This conception of the body as a dwelling place, like a house, like a city, comes in the Upaniṣads. *Gītā* refers to it here. We are not the body, we *live* in the body. *Navadvāre pure dehī*, this has nine gateways to come and go; seven in the head, and two below. These are the nine *dvāras* or openings according to the *Gītā*. In the Upaniṣads, it is referred to as eleven *dvāras,* including the navel and the *brahma randhra,* the hole in the head. That is eleven, here it is nine. *Navadvāre pure dehī; dehī,* one who lives in the *deha* or body is the *dehī,* 'the embodied one'. I am not the body, I *live* in the body. I am not the house, I *live* in the house. Body is like a house to us. That is why we have to keep it clean. That is why unlike our recent misunderstanding, neglect of the body is never allowed in Vedanta; it is just like neglecting your house. If you don't keep it clean, if you don't repair it, attend to its maintenance, soon it will become unfit to live in. So also the body. Take care of the body. This is a house in which you live. Keep it clean. But don't get attached to it. Body is only a vantage, wherefrom you can go out, do your work and come. So also is the house in which you live. Don't get tied to the house. When you are tied to the house, the house becomes a prison. We are not free to come in, nor free to go out. That is called a prison. That is how persons who live in prisons are not free to come, nor free to go. Their house becomes a prison. If our body also becomes a prison, that will be very unhappy situation. Don't make the body

a prison. Be free; you can go out, you can come in, freely. What a beautiful idea of human life and human freedom!

As I said earlier, ancient Chinese thought also stresses this point. Without doing any action, you are able to produce results. That action is mental. Mentally he or she is free. Physically he or she is acting in plenty. Therefore, he or she is said to be free from action. That is the high mystical thought in China as well as in Japan. Without excitement, without tension, without noise, without fuss, when you work, with a calm mind, it is as good as non-acting. This can be done, and the whole teaching of the *Gītā* regarding work is this: act without fuss. Live without fuss. Fussy action, fussy living, is not living at all. So, that fuss-free life can be lived by training the mind in calmness, perfect self-control and self-possession, aligning it with the Atman, which is one's true nature and which is always inactive and all-powerful, and yet doing all the work. All these verses refer to this tremendous possibility in all of us, by training our minds according to the teachings given in the *Gītā. Karma-yoga, karma* in the light of *yoga* —therefore, it is called *karma-yoga.* Mere *karma,* without any *yoga,* all animals do; men and women also do; but, only human beings can train themselves in doing *karma* in the light of *yoga.* That teaching began from the second chapter when Śrī Kṛṣṇa started to expound this wonderful new philosophy of 'work without attachment'; with that type of attitude known as *buddhi-yoga;* that type of *buddhi,* which is *sama,* equal, without any ups and downs in the *buddhi;* work is full of ups and downs, but the *buddhi* is absolutely free. This is possible. So, *buddhiyukta,* 'one who has that *buddhi*', is certainly a *karma-yogī.* Now comes a very beautiful idea of Vedanta in the next verse.

न कर्तृत्वं न कर्माणि लोकस्य सृजति प्रभुः ।
न कर्मफलसंयोगं स्वभावस्तु प्रवर्तते ॥१४॥

Na kartṛtvam na karmāṇi lokasya sṛjati prabhuḥ;
Na karma phala samyogam svabhāvastu pravartate — 5. 14

'Neither agency, nor actions does the Lord create for the world, nor (does He bring about) the union with the fruit of action. It is nature that does it all.'

The divine personality, the supreme divine Being, 'did not prescribe any agency of action', *na kartṛtvam. Na karmāṇi,* 'nor actions'. *Lokasya sṛjati prabhuḥ,* 'neither of these was prescribed by the divine Lord for humanity'. Then how does this action go on? *Svabhāvastu pravartate,* 'nature does it all'. As in the case of the animals, it is nature that is impelling us; nature that is outside has found a place within us also. Man is an outpost of external nature in many respects. Our digestive system, our reactions, are all the work of nature. So, *svabhāvastu pravartate,* '*svabhāva* or nature is acting in you and in me' as well as in the outer world. Here *svabhāva* means nature. That plain nature outside induces us to eat, drink, to rear families. All that is *svabhāva* acting through the human being. God did not tell me to do this or that. This is the language. That *svabhāva* or nature has entered into us and become part of our constitution. Impelled by it we do all these things. That is the truth about the human being.

I had occasion to refer to the book, *Modern Man in Search of A Soul,* by Carl Jung, the famous Zurich psychologist. He also makes a distinction between our actions impelled by nature, and our actions impelled by our own higher nature. Vedanta alone speaks of a higher dimension of nature, *parā prakṛti,* apart from *aparā prakṛti,* ordinary nature. The first is intelligence and the second is non-intelligence. Vedanta speaks of the dominance of the intelligent principle, *parā prakṛti*, over the *aparā prakṛti* or *svabhāva,* as the instrument of human freedom, as the goal of human evolution. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa clearly puts it, *svabhāvastu pravartate,* '*svabhāva* or ordinary nature is acting in all of us'. It is like this: Somebody abuses me and I immediately give him a slap. What has happened? *Svabhāva* has taken charge and acted in me. I have another *svabhāva,* intelligence or *parā prakṛti,* by which I can check it. That *svabhāva* is silent, not functioning yet. Everything is *svabhāva,* or *aparā prakṛti.*

Raw nature is functioning in you and me. The other is my higher nature, my own true nature as the Atman helping me to check all these and making me behave in a better way. This higher nature rarely finds expression. In most people, only the lower nature, *aparā prakṛti* or *svabhāva,* is there; the external nature manifesting in our physiology, anatomy, neurology, and even psychology. Much of our psyche is controlled by this external nature. So, this is a fact to be understood. A human being is a combination of two

natures: the external nature, and the higher nature, i.e. intelligence. The higher nature functions as a subordinate of external nature in most people. It cannot express itself because the other nature, *aparā prakṛti,* is very dominant in most people. That is ordinary human life out of which comes crime, delinquency, etc. But whenever that nature is slowly controlled, and the higher nature finds manifestation, then slowly spiritual culture comes. We evolve into better and still better human beings. Real civilization itself is the product of a little dominance of this higher nature over that lower nature. This is the meaning of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's telling us here, *na kartṛtvam na karmāṇi lokasya sṛjati prabhuḥ*. *'Prabhu,* the divine Master of the world, did not prescribe either agency of action, or action, to any individual here.' Then he says, *na karma phala samyogam*, 'nor the bringing out the union with the fruit of action'. Then how does life go on? *Svabhāvastu pravartate.* '*Svabhāva* is acting'.

Having said this, the lesson we have to learn is that, that *svabhāva,* which is external nature, *aparā prakṛti,* which has found lodgement in our system, we shall control it, we shall go beyond it by expressing our true nature as pure intelligence, because we are a combination of both, what we call in Vedantic language, *cit-jaḍa-granthi.* Every human being is a knot of *cit* and *jaḍa. Cit* means consciousness. *Jaḍa* means inert nature. Both are there in a human being. In external nature it is all *jaḍa.* But when you come to living beings, you are in the realm of consciousness as well. And that too, with respect to a human being, a higher form of consciousness called self consciousness, the consciousness of the self as 'I, I, I' gets manifested. No animal can experience 'I'; only the human being has this awareness of being a subject and not an object. That is why we are asked to treat every human being as a subject and never as an object. Generally, when we exploit others, we treat them as objects. But when moral sense comes we think, 'no, everybody must be treated as a subject. I am a subject, you are also a subject. I should treat you as a subject and not as an object'. That is called moral sense. *To see the subject in a social object is called moral sense*. Human being is a social object, unlike material objects like tables and chairs. This human being, therefore, has a uniqueness. He or she has a subjective dimension also. So, we treat him or her as a subject, and never always as an object. In the treatment of ethics by the German philosopher

Kant, you will find this idea. That is ethical sense according to Kant and according to Vedanta. By manifesting our higher nature, let us try to control and dominate that *svabhāva* or lower nature; the *jaḍa svabhāva* is to be controlled by the *cit svabhāva*.

That is called the human being's spiritual evolution. Out of that will come tremendous peace and harmony in the world. The human being will be the saviour of the whole world. Otherwise, if he or she is subject to the *jaḍa svabhāva* within, the human being will as well be the author of destroying the whole of nature and the whole of humanity. That is the situation in the world today. Most people are subject to the *jaḍa svabhāva.* They want to live according to that *svabhāva,* which I had referred to in the first volume in relation to the American youth movement as *impulse release* philosophy. Release all your impulses as they come. Don't check them, don't discipline them. That *jaḍa svabhāva* must be allowed to work freely. That is a dangerous philosophy that is going on now practically all over the world. We have to reverse it. Let the other higher *svabhāva* begin to function in you. There is something very precious in you. You are free, you are free. *Jaḍa* nature is not free, but you are free. You are a mixture of freedom and no-freedom. Assert the freedom part in you.

In this connection, I would like to mention one of the many experiences I had during my 18 months lecture tour of North and South America in 1968-69, one of which was at Portland Radio on 31 January, 1969. America was then passing through the Hippy and drop-out movement. Mr. Fenwick, of the drop-out type, was the interviewer. It was the most illuminating experience which I have recorded in my book, *A Pilgrim Looks at the World*. (Vol. 2, pp. 27-29: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai)

'The interview began with his introduction of me to the listeners. As happens in all cases where yogis and spiritual teachers, especially from India, are interviewed, the introduction starts on a light note. So introducing me to the listeners, Mr. Fenwick said: Oh, here is another Swami in front of me! He is so and so, etc., etc. But, within a minute, the whole aspect changed, as I gently changed the subject into the problem of man in modern civilization and other serious topics. Mr. Fenwick immediately caught the inspiration of the new situation and shouted into the microphone: Oh, this is

a new type of Swami! Please listen to what he says! All flimsiness vanished immediately and, from then on, it was earnest and serious discussion till the end.

'And in the course of the next few minutes of the interview, I had occasion to refer to the need for a measure of self-discipline on the part of modern man. No sooner had I uttered the word 'discipline', than Mr. Fenwick interrupted me and protested loudly into the microphone: Oh Swami, we don't believe in all this discipline! What is there to discipline? We believe in being *spontaneous, natural*.

'He uttered these words in a triumphant manner and with a touch of hilarity. But I was not put out, but at once grasped the whole background of thought behind his remark, and said: Mr. Fenwick, you were highly appreciating, just a few moments ago, Pundit Ravi Shankar's beautiful sitar music. How fascinating, how spontaneous, how natural, is his music! You had said. That is fine, I said, and continued: But did you ever stop to think even for a moment, Mr. Fenwick, that behind that spontaneity and naturalness of Ravi Shankar's music, there lie years and years of hard discipline? Did you ever give a thought to that?

'As soon as I had put it that way, Mr. Fenwick became excited and literally burst into the microphone to say: That is a wonderful idea! I had never thought of it that way! This is something new! I do realize the importance of discipline from that point of view. And he exclaimed into the microphone: All of you, listen to what the learned Swami from India has to say!

'By this time, the scheduled 20 minutes period was ending; but his interest in the discussion, on the other hand, was just mounting; and he asked me sweetly, and in the hearing of his listeners, for, the whole programme was a live transmission: Swami, are you tired? Can we continue the interview? No, I am not tired at all, I replied; I am ready to go on as long as you like. At this, he was happy, and announced it into the microphone, and the interview ended only at midnight!

'Continuing the theme, I said: Mr. Fenwick, I also appreciate naturalness and spontaneity. Human life should be natural, spontaneous.

But I discern two types or two levels of spontaneity and naturalness; one lies below discipline, and the other lies above discipline. And, for the next several minutes, he was an absorbed listener, putting an occasional question or re-stressing a point I had made, as I was expounding this theme in the light of Vedanta and twentieth-century biological thought.

'The animal is spontaneous and *natural*, I continued; the cow or horse eases itself wherever it stays or moves. That is one type of naturalness. But do we not subject a human child to a bit of toilet discipline? That is the first lesson we give to all children, followed by other disciplines first given to children by parents from outside, then given by children to themselves, so that they may rise to the level of *human nature* and develop the human way. All culture is the product of discipline of the impulses; and culture is specifically a human phenomenon; animals have no culture. By such judicious discipline, guided by reason and love of truth, *man manifests the higher and higher aspects of nature, first the human, then the divine*, from within oneself. And the whole of such discipline of impulses, and the manifestation of the divine within, *can be as natural and spontaneous a process* as the expression of impulses at the organic level, when we understand the wide range of the meaning of the words 'nature' and 'natural'.

'Two types of people, I continued, do not need discipline or do not experience tension and struggle, and are perfectly natural and spontaneous; and I quoted the following well-known verse from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the greatest book on *bhakti*, or pure love of God, in the Indian tradition, to explain the point (III. vii. 17):

Yaśca mūḍhatamo loke yaśca buddheḥ param gataḥ;
Tāvubhau sukham edhete kliśyatyantirito janaḥ —

"Two types of people experience happiness and are free from all tension, namely, the uttermost fool among men (in whom the struggle for humanness has not yet commenced), and the one who has gone beyond *buddhi*, intellect or reason, (in the *experience* of the Atman, the infinite divine Self, and the transcendence of both animal and human nature). All others, in between, are in varying stages of tension and struggle."'

That is how Vedanta tells people that, don't take things as they are. You can make them better and still better. There is a progress from this to that. You can be the architect of your own destiny. No animal can be the architect of its own destiny. Nature is the architect there. In our case, *svabhāva* is not our architect, nature is not our architect. *We* are the architect, *we* can reshape our lives. This must be constantly kept in view. Because we forgot it after the independence of India, *jaḍa* nature is acting in its own way in India. Raw humanity, just selfish; quarrelling, fighting, killing; everything just as we do in a wild state. That is a great misfortune. Human dignity doesn't find expression there. I can easily kill anyone or, if I am a cannibal, I can eat him or her also. But in civilization, at least we don't eat human beings. Swami Vivekananda said, the old cannibals *ate* human beings; today we do not do so, but we *cheat* each other. The same cannibalism in a new way. That has to go. When you free yourself from that *jaḍa svabhāva,* that *svabhāva* which has got into your psycho-physical system, beyond which is the Atman, that Atman begins to find expression in you. Try to find its expression. A little expression is there when the baby develops the consciousness of 'I' and expresses, 'I want it, I want it'. That 'I' is like the tip of a tremendous rock that is below the water level. Only the tip you see. That is all we consider as this 'I'.

But that is not its true dimension. That dimension is infinite. That 'I' is really one with all. That is the truth which is going to be told by the *Gītā* a few *ślokas* later, that this concept of *yoga* will lead you to that realization. We are essentially one. There is only one Atman in all of us; that truth is going to be told. And therefore, let this 'I' be treated as the tip of a big rock projecting above the water level. Unless you probe deeper, you won't see that immense dimension. That little ego is the visible part of something immense, namely, the infinite immortal Atman. Depending only on the little tip, the ego creates all the mischief in human life. Treat it as a simple initial datum. Try to find its true dimension. As you begin to dive into it, you will find the ego is expanding and expanding, and ultimately, realizing that, 'I am one with all. We are all essentially one.' Then something great will happen. That is how this chapter is going to give us a profound message of human unity and equality. How we shall live in society as the equal of all? What a beautiful concept! Equality is an inspiring concept. We are one, we

are all equal. So, that is being given to us a few verses later in this very chapter.

All these teachings are not just dogmas. This is meant to be thought about, meant to be applied, meant to be checked up, meant to be verified. The science of *yoga* in the *Gītā* is a verifiable science. That is what we are asked to do. Let us see how this will function in our case. No misty ideas are here. Everything is clear; dealing with the human being, his or her possibilities, and how he or she can unfold these possibilities. So, in the next *śloka*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues this idea.

नादत्ते कस्यचित् पापं न चैव सुकृतं विभुः ।
अज्ञानेनावृतं ज्ञानं तेन मुह्यन्ति जन्तवः ॥१५॥

Nādatte kasyacit pāpam na caiva sukṛtam vibhuḥ;
Ajñānenāvṛtam jñānam tena muhyanti jantavaḥ — 5. 15

'The Omnipresent Divine does not take the merit and demerit of anyone. Knowledge is enveloped by ignorance, hence do beings get deluded.'

What a wonderful idea! This *vibhu,* the divine Master of the universe, does not take the sins of anybody, nor the merits of anybody. *Nādatte kasyacit pāpam*, 'doesn't take the sins of anyone'; *na caiva sukṛtam*, 'nor whatever good anyone does'. But what is the actual situation? *Ajñānena āvṛtam jñānam*, '*jñāna* is hidden by *ajñāna*', *tena muhyanti jantavaḥ*, 'thereby the creatures are deluded'. That is the situation.

Our *jñāna* is lying hidden by *ajñāna*. That makes us deluded. And we function in that deluded state. That is what we do everyday. This was referred to in the third chapter, towards the end (3. 38), dealing with the source of crime in society. There also Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said, *ajñāna* or spiritual blindness covers *jñāna,* just like ash covers fire. You find no fire at all. Fire is there, but covered by ash. Remove the ash, put a few faggots, you find again the flame coming. So also, this *ajñāna* is hiding *jñāna;* it means, being subject to that *svabhāva* referred to earlier, just like all animals which are subject to that *svabhāva* or nature. But in the case of human beings, we can redeem ourselves from this *svabhāva* by the power of the higher

svabhāva in us which is called here *jñāna,* spiritual knowledge. That effort is being referred to here. But at present, *ajñānenāvṛtam jñānam,* '*jñānam* is covered over by *ajñāna*'. *Tena muhyanti jantavaḥ,* 'thereby, beings are deluded'. When there is *ajñāna,* there is delusion. When there is *jñāna*, there is no delusion at all. We see things clearly. Just like when you drive in a foggy weather, you can't see your way. That is the state of *ajñāna* or delusion. So many accidents can take place. I remember my being taken from Paris airport to our Vedanta Ashrama in Gretz, a distance of 29 kilometres, in February 1961. So thick was the fog, we couldn't see one inch ahead of us. And the road was small. How slowly we had to go to avoid any kind of accident! So, this *ajñāna* is like that fog. We can't see the way at all. *Tena muhyanti jantavaḥ,* 'by that, beings are deluded'. But will it remain like this all the time? No. We can lift the fog. We can remove that *ajñāna.* That is the text of the next *śloka.*

ज्ञानेन तु तदज्ञानं येषां नाशितमात्मनः ।
तेषामादित्यवज्ज्ञानं प्रकाशयति तत्परम् ॥१६॥

Jñānena tu tadajñānam yeṣām nāśitamātmanaḥ;
Teṣām ādityavajjñānam prakāśayati tatparam — 5. 16

'But whose ignorance or spiritual blindness is destroyed by knowledge (of the Self)—that knowledge of theirs, like the sun, reveals that Supreme (Brahman).'

What beautiful ideas, what beautiful illustrations you find here! *Jñānena tu tat ajñānam yeṣām nāśitam,* 'whose *ajñāna* or spiritual blindness is destroyed by *jñāna* or knowledge'; *ātmanaḥ*, 'of the Self'; that is, 'I have destroyed my *ajñāna* by my *jñāna*;' when that happens, *teṣām,* 'their'; *ādityavat tat jñānam param prakāśayati*, 'that knowledge of such a person reveals that Supreme Brahman, just like the sun in the sky,' which was once covered over by thick clouds, but is shining brightly now as the clouds have gone. The sun was there, but it was hidden by clouds. Similarly, here also, *jñāna* reveals to you your own infinite dimension. You are not a chip of that *svabhāva.* There is another profound dimension within you. This truth shines on you when *jñāna* removes *ajñāna* from your system. It was shining then also; it is shining now too; the cloud could not

destroy the sun's effulgence; but it could make the sun invisible. In your case also, it is the same. *Prakāśa* means shine. Till now it was not shining. All human beings, proclaims Vedanta, are essentially pure and free. We are of the nature of pure consciousness. We are of the nature of light. The light of consciousness is our nature. But when we are deluded, that light becomes dim and we do all sorts of evil. Remove that delusion. Remove that *ajñāna*. Then *jñāna* shines in its own splendour. The British poet Robert Browning calls it 'the Imprisoned Splendour' in his poem *Paracelsus*. That wonderful splendour is in you, in me, in all. Even in the animals it is there. Vedanta speaks of the Atman as present even in the tiniest worm. It is there, but that body won't be able to discover this truth. Only in the human body, can this truth be sought after and discovered.

That is the supreme uniqueness of the human being. We are striving to understand this ever-present truth of the infinite Atman as our true nature. *Svabhāva* or external nature is controlling us. We have to develop additional strength to overcome that drag of *svabhāva* on us. Then we realize that *ajñāna* is gone, *jñāna* has come, like the sun shining when the clouds have departed. That is what is happening to you and to me in all our spiritual, ethical and moral development. *Tatparam,* 'when attuned to That', by making our mind attuned to the divine that is within, a human being is able to overcome *ajñāna* and realize one's own true nature thereby. This is a beautiful verse, verse 16. This term, *tat para,* will come in a full verse ahead. Complete dedication to that Divine truth that is hidden within us will be expounded in a verse to come.

This is the great truth about all human beings. We can call it the Science of Human Possibilities, just like we have the Science of Physical Nature's Possibilities. This wonderful human being can achieve such great heights. That little baby of today can become a Mohammed Ali or an Einstein or a Buddha tomorrow. All that possibility is sleeping in every human child. We have to help the baby to unfold these possibilities. That is the word *jñāna*. The human being alone has the capacity for *jñāna;* in animals *jñāna* is centred in the sensory system, never beyond it. You can see this in the behaviour of all animals. What the *Devī Māhātmyam,* that great book on the Divine Mother says (1. 47):

Jñānam asti samastasya jantor viṣayagocare

Samastasya jantoḥ, 'of all creatures', their *jñāna* functions only at the sensory level. The bird can look and find out where its prey is. Also, other animals can do the same; all at the sensory level, never at the higher level. In the human being alone is there the capacity to go beyond the sensory level and discover knowledge in its true form. That is *jñānam*; scientific, ethical, and spiritual. A few verses later this idea will be developed still further and a new truth will be added, namely, the spirit of equality, equal-mindedness, equality of vision; that can be taken as the great message of this fifth chapter.

What is the significance of the word *svabhāva* or *prakṛti* or nature? The *Gītā* has referred to it in many places. Usually—and in the Western context too—it means only physical nature or external nature. But, from the Indian point of view, there is another approach to this subject of *svabhāva.* The whole of reality is *svabhāva,* but it has two dimensions. Ordinary *svabhāva* is *aparā prakṛti,* and higher *svabhāva* is *parā prakṛti,* as will be expounded in the seventh chapter fully. The word *prakṛti* also means the same, *svabhāva,* or nature. So, in the chapter that lies ahead, we shall study nature in these two dimensions, ordinary *prakṛti* and higher *prakṛti.* Both together constitute reality.

That is what the *Gītā* is going to tell us later on. So, this concept of *prakṛti, aparā* and *parā,* is treated as the Divine Mother, or the Divine *Śakti* or *Parāśakti* in Indian mythology and spiritual thought. What is dull, dead nature becomes the expression of that *cit-śakti* or energy of Consciousness, the *Parā-Śakti*, the Divine Mother. In the *Gītā* this is referred to several times but in the *Devī Māhātmyam*, *The Glory of the Divine Mother*, this is the central theme. The Divine Mother is everything. All energy or *Śakti* of the universe, whether it is physical, biological, intellectual, or spiritual, is the manifestation of that one Divine *Śakti,* the *Ādyā Śakti,* the 'Primordial Divine Energy'. That is what manifests as this universe; manifests it, withdraws it, again brings it out. And this Divine Mother is praised in that *Devī Māhātmyam: Prakṛtistvam hi sarvasya,* 'You are the *Prakṛti* of everything'; *guṇa traya vibhāgini*, 'Your *Prakṛti* is of three-fold nature, *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*'*; kālarātriḥ mahārātriḥ moharātriśca dāruṇā*, 'that

Prakṛti can make for a *moharātri,* a very terrible night of delusion'; for a *kālarātri, '*a dark night'; and a *mahārātri,* 'a dense night of ignorance'. We are, everyone of us, a playground of the forces of this *Prakṛti, aparā* as well as *parā.* When we are selfish, violent, cruel, *aparā prakṛti* is functioning within us. When we are compassionate, loving and peaceful, *parā prakṛti* is functioning within us. It is for us to change from one to the other. *That is where human freedom comes.* No animal can do it. No nature can do it. But that higher nature which manifests in the human system, that can transform the operation of *svabhāva* from the ordinary to the extraordinary. *That is the uniqueness of the human being;* then, this body and mind will become the playground only of that higher nature or higher *Prakṛti,* not of the lower *Prakṛti*. This is our responsibility. In the *Devī Māhātmyam* this is beautifully expressed in many places. The Divine Mother is called that *Ādyā Prakṛti,* that *Parā Prakṛti,* and the whole universe is Her energy manifestation, *Śakti* manifestation.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, whenever you are conscious of yourself and the external world, you are within the jurisdiction of this *Śakti*, this Divine *Prakṛti*. Whenever you go into deep *samādhi,* then alone you go beyond the *Śakti* jurisdiction. So, *Śakti* jurisdiction extends throughout the universe, everywhere, in external nature and in the human being at various levels. But when we come to the *nirvikalpa* state of *samādhi,* going beyond all duality, then we go beyond *Śakti* to that *Śiva* nature, which is eternal, without change, ever the same. But, till then all are within the jurisdiction of *Śakti, Ādyā Śakti*, or *Parā Śakti.* So, here three words are used: *Kālarātri, mahārātri* and *moharātri. Rātri* means (darkness of) 'night'. What is that darkness of night? Delusion. *Moharātri,* 'the dark night of delusion'. And *Mahārātri,* 'very dense darkness of ignorance and misunderstanding'. And then, *Kālarātri,* 'frightful night'. Sometimes we pass through frightful experiences, all due to delusion. All that is because of being in this type of *rātri.* There is no light. There is no knowledge. There is no illumination. That is also the same *Prakṛti* or Nature; for example, in a piece of stone, it is absolute darkness. There is no consciousness. There you can see that kind of darkness of delusion. In ourselves also, every now and then, we will find this darkness of delusion, and we do all sorts of evil in that condition. The Divine Mother is playing in that particular way in you

and me. But, what we are asked to do is the other way. Let Mother's higher energy, the *Parā Prakṛti,* manifest in and through us. We have to do it. We have the freedom to do it. Let people realize this great truth. We are free to allow *Aparā Prakṛti* to play in us, or *Parā Prakṛti* to play in us. That must be the first truth we must realize. Don't say it is all destiny. I can change, I can change the play from one to the other. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna, *Avidyā Māyā* and *Vidyā Māyā,* are two aspects of *Māyā.* Let *Vidyā Māyā* be within me. When you try to help people, you are influenced by *Vidyā Māyā;* when you try to injure people, you are influenced by *Avidyā Māyā.* The heart is the playground for either of them. And we are responsible. The human being has a sense of ethical responsibility. Animals have no responsibility. They are not subject to ethical judgement. If you go near an ass and it gives you a kick; you can't say 'you are a bad ass'. It is an ass, that is all. There is no good, there is no bad; that is its nature. It does so just to express its own nature. In us also, there is that ass nature, and yet, a higher nature also. We can control that ass nature. If a person comes near me, I need not bump on him. I can shake hands, I can smile, it is up to me to do this way or that way. *Svabhāvastu pravartate—svabhāva* in this sense means that lower nature. That is activating us to do this and that. The higher nature of *svabhāva* also can activate us. Then great character comes, great spiritual development will come.

That is how the word *Prakṛti* or *svabhāva* is used in this *Devī Māhātmyam* and in much of Sri Ramakrishna's teaching. Brahman and *Śakti,* Brahman and *Māyā, Śiva* and *Śakti,* they are one and the same. But the *Śakti* aspect is what makes for the manifestation of this universe. When *Śakti* pulsates, the universe comes into being. When the *Śakti* becomes quiescent, the universe is withdrawn. In fact, one of the most beautiful truths of the Sāṅkhya philosophy is, whenever the three *guṇas* are in perfect equilibrium, there is no universe. This is similar to the modern Western astronomy's concept of the state of singularity. That is what is called *Pralaya.* The whole universe is withdrawn into its Primordial Nature. What a beautiful conception! And when does manifestation begin or creation begin? When there is a slight disturbance in the equilibrium of the three *guṇas*. The creative process, the manifestation process, starts. Then all the uniformity that existed before becomes diversity. What was one, becomes

many. That is put into the Upaniṣadic statement by saying: Suppose that primordial Reality, that background material of modern astronomy, were to say what it experienced, then what would be its language? That is what the Upaniṣad says: *Eko'ham bahusyām,* 'I am one, let me be many'. That Primordial Background Stuff, which exploded and became the universe, that concept of the Big Bang as they call it in modern Western astronomy, is close to this conception.

These are beautiful ideas in our cosmology, which very much echo the great ideas of modern cosmology. Only, Indian cosmology had taken one step more. It found a high place for Consciousness behind this Background Material, which much of modern astronomy doesn't find a place for. But some Western astronomers *are* trying to find a place for Consciousness and thus coming to ancient Indian Cosmology. That is what I once before referred to in the first volume, namely, British astronomer Fred Hoyle's later book, *The Intelligent Universe.* Till now we were dealing with an un-intelligent universe. Now we are dealing with an intelligent universe. If modern astronomy continues in that line, it will come exactly to what the Sāṅkhyas and Vedantists have discovered here. In that primordial State, everything is one alone and non-dual. *Ekam eva advitīyam brahma,* 'Brahman, that ultimate Reality, is one alone, and not two'. That Brahman in its *Śakti* aspect, became manifested as this universe. Sri Ramakrishna said, Brahman and *Śakti* are one, the Impersonal and Personal aspects of the ultimate Reality. Vedanta calls it *Parā Prakṛti, Parā Śakti* or ultimate Reality, a combination of *Parā* and *Aparā Prakṛti.* That subject will come up fully in the seventh chapter.

So, in this statement of verse 14, *svabhāvastu pravartate,* '*svabhāva* acts', we must not fail to realize the divine dimension of that *svabhāva.* That *svabhāva* which is very dull, dead matter, in ordinary physical terms, is entirely that Pure Consciousness in action, in the *Śakti* form. It becomes dull dead matter on one side, and consciousness and conscious beings, on the other. Therefore, *Prakṛti* has two dimensions, the unconscious and the conscious, the *jaḍa* and the *cit.* Both are there in *Prakṛti.* When *Gītā* refers to our activities, *Gītā* refers to that *jaḍa prakṛti, svabhāva. Svabhāva* is acting in you and me. But *Gītā* will assure us, don't be frightened by *svabhāva.* That very *svabhāva* is the manifestation of the Divine Mother in

the form of lower nature and higher nature. That is how, in India, we developed the feminine aspect of the divine, the divine *Śakti*. From Her the universe has come. She maintains this universe. These ideas come in many verses in the *Devī Māhātmyam.* 'Eternal Feminine' is a beautiful phrase used by Goethe, the German poet and dramatist, in his book, *The Faust.* That last line of *The Faust* is simply wonderful. 'The Eternal Feminine leads us on and on.' Goethe must have read Indian philosophy and he admired Kālidāsa's *Śakuntala*. By that time lots of Indian books were coming up in Europe. So, this concept of the Eternal Feminine which leads us on and on, is exactly that Divine *Śakti, Parā Śakti,* which is behind this whole universe. What a beautiful conception! My divine Mother, as Sri Ramakrishna said again and again. Everything is under the jurisdiction of the Divine Mother. We call it Kālī. Many other names are there. These names are nothing.

'O Black Mother! Have none sung Thy praise? I shall sing Thy praise, O Mother.' This is written by Walt Whitman of America. We also sing similarly. Dark Mother, concept of Kālī.

So, you can view the universe as a combination of Brahman and *Śakti, Śiva* and *Śakti. Śakti* is feminine. So, we call it the Divine Mother, from whom the whole universe has come, who withdraws the universe unto Herself. That is how the concept of God as Mother came into Indian thought and that concept was pre-Christian thought, present in Europe and in many other primitive cultures. But philosophically and spiritually developed concept of God as Mother, is the product of Indian thought only, developed by the help of Vedanta. That is why even a high philosopher like Śaṅkarācārya speaks of the Divine Mother as supreme in many of his songs and hymns. So, the *Gītā* here has referred to that particular idea: God has not prescribed any work for you, nor any fruit of work. But *svabhāvastu pravartate. Svabhāva* that is in you is making you work this way and that way. This *svabhāva* is nature in its ordinary form. We are here to overcome this aspect of Nature and build up the higher nature that is waiting to find expression. That is *parā prakṛti,* superior *prakṛti.* And both together constitute the totality of the Cause of the universe. That is what the *Gītā* will say in the seventh chapter. *Śloka* 15 said that the Divine does not take the *pāpam* or sin of anybody, nor the *puṇyam* or merit of anybody. The truth

is *ajñānenāvṛtam jñānam*, '*jñāna* is hidden by *ajñāna*', and the result is, *tena muhyanti jantavaḥ*, 'all beings are under delusion because of that'. And it is through this delusion that we commit all the evil deeds that we do. This must be overcome. How? The present *śloka* 16 says:

Jñānena tu tadajñānam yeṣām nāśitamātmanaḥ;
Teṣām ādityavajjñānam prakāśayati tatparam —

'Through *jñāna*, when this *ajñāna* is overcome within oneself, in such people the ultimate Reality is revealed by that *jñāna,* just like the sun shining in the sky lighting up the whole world.'

Jñāna, spiritual knowledge, is the theme. In the fourth chapter also it was the theme. Here also it is *the* theme. But, in all these, it means redeeming spiritual knowledge, not book knowledge. We may have any amount of scholarship. That doesn't make for even the slightest illumination. It is only scholarship and nothing else. Sri Ramakrishna speaks of a parable about this type of mere intellectual knowledge, how it cannot save you from this life of delusion. A number of people got into a boat to cross a river. Among them was a philosopher, an intellectual. So, when the boat was moving, he asked the boatman, 'My dear boatman, have you studied psychology?' 'No, sir'. After some time he said, 'then 25 per cent of your life is a waste!' Then after some time, he asked, 'have you studied biology?' 'No, sir.' '50 per cent of your life is a waste!' One by one he went on thus. Next time he asked, 'Have you studied philosophy?' 'No, sir.' 'Then 75 per cent of your life is lost!', he said like that. People in the boat were watching. Then came a storm. The boat started to rock. And the philosopher became very much worried about what was going to happen. Then the poor boatman gently asked the philosopher, 'Do you know swim-ology?' 'No, sir!' 'Then one hundred per cent of *your* life is gone,' said the boatman. Mere intellectualism is not religion. You have to realize the truth for yourself.

So, Sri Ramakrishna has compared great intellectuals and scholars to kites flying high up in the sky. But where is their attention? On some dead body lying below on the earth. That is the nature of mere intellectualism. So, this *jñāna* is spiritual illumination, awakening. That alone can destroy delusion. Delusion cannot be removed by book-reading, by scholarship. Not

at all. In fact, it may increase also that kind of delusion; later on, pride is added, arrogance is added. So try to have realization, *anubhava.* What is needed is to rise from intellect to experience. Intellectually, I know so much about love, I may write a book and get a PhD degree, but if you ask, do you know *how* to love? 'That I don't know. I know *about* love, I can write a good deal, but I don't experience love at all.' Then what is the use of that scholarship? In all departments, this is true. You write a book on citizenship, but you yourself do not behave like a citizen. What is the use of that knowledge of citizenship? You know about law, but behave lawlessly all the time! What is the use of that knowledge of law? You study science, but don't have scientific thinking. You have no scientific attitude. What is the use of that science? In all these matters, 'be' is more important than mere 'know'. That is why Swami Vivekananda defined religion as *being and becoming*. *Jñāna* or spiritual knowledge overcomes *ajñāna* or ignorance, just like the sun illumines the whole world; the ultimate Reality is revealed to you through that *jñāna*. This is a very great statement in this 16th verse. Then comes verse 17, one of the most wonderful verses, full of meaning.

तद्बुद्धयस्तदात्मानस्तन्निष्ठास्तत्परायणाः ।
गच्छन्त्यपुनरावृत्तिं ज्ञाननिर्धूतकल्मषाः ॥१७॥

Tadbuddhayaḥ tadātmānaḥ tanniṣṭhāḥ tatparāyaṇāḥ;
Gacchantyapunarāvṛttim jñāna nirdhūta kalmaṣāḥ — 5. 17

'Those who have their intellect absorbed in That, whose self is That, whose steadfastness is in That, whose consummation is That, their impurities cleansed by knowledge, they attain to non-re-birth (*mokṣa*).'

This is a remarkable verse. *Tat buddhayaḥ,* 'those whose *buddhi* or intellect or reason is devoted to That', that supreme Reality. *Tat ātmānaḥ,* 'who has That as one's own Self'. *Tat niṣṭhāḥ,* 'who have constant discipline in That'. *Tat parāyaṇāḥ,* 'whose final goal is That'. The word *Tat* comes in this verse four times in all. *Gacchanti apunarāvṛttim*, 'they will reach the state from which there is no rebirth'. To them there is no more *samsāra. Jñāna-nirdhūta-kalmaṣāḥ,* 'those whose evils of the mind, all sins and impurities, have been destroyed through *jñāna*'. *Kalmaṣāḥ,* 'evils', are

nirdhūta, 'destroyed' or washed away. Therefore, he is able to achieve that Supreme State from which there is no rebirth. This constant birth and death, like a wheel going on, of which we are all helpless victims, that won't happen to them; they become free. This is a preliminary statement. In a later *śloka*, the greatness of that achievement is shown that you get it *here and now*, not in some future life, not in some heaven. Here itself, in this life, in this body, we can come to this state of realization, this state of non-birth, the state in which we are truly free. In birth and death, we are not free. A potter takes clay, puts it on his wheel, makes pots, and thus it goes on. Clay has no say in the matter. We are like that clay in the hands of the nature, putting it this way, that way. But that condition will end for you. Nobody can shake you then. You will become your own master, *svarājya,* as we call it.

This is a wonderful idea in Vedanta. Śaṅkarācārya refers to it as *svārājya-siddhi,* 'you become your own master'. No outsider is going to dictate to you. That is high spiritual freedom, spiritual realization. And the method is this: *Tadbuddhayaḥ,* the *buddhi* is fixed on That. *Tadātmānaḥ, tanniṣṭhāḥ, tatparāyaṇāḥ.* I am constantly aware of that. That is the goal; not these petty little achievements everyday. Such persons, *gacchanti,* 'attain', *apunarāvṛttim,* 'no repeated birth and death'. *Samsāra* means that which moves on, the state of birth and death, constantly like a *cakra* or wheel. That condition of life does not come to such a person. *Apunarāvṛtti* means also *mokṣaḥ,* real spiritual liberation. *That is the highest goal of human evolution, according to Vedanta*. A human being alone can achieve that perfect freedom, freedom of the spirit. Many other freedoms we seek. Freedom from hunger, freedom from thirst, from illiteracy, all these things we seek. These are all needed at our ordinary level of life. But even there, the supreme freedom is the freedom of the spirit. Suppose you are fed well, given good clothes and a good house to live in. But, in spite of these, you are a slave under a master. What fun is there? Those things have no value. The most important thing is freedom. I want to be free. That infinite urge in every human heart finds its consummation in this spiritual realization: I am the Atman, ever-free, ever-pure; that is my true nature. No delusion will make me fall down from that state. That delusion has been burnt away through *jñāna*, or washed away, *jñānanirdhūta kalmaṣāḥ*. All *kalmaṣāḥ* or evils have been washed away, destroyed, through *jñāna*. Then this freedom

becomes a fact. Now, it is only an ideal: 'I *want* to be free'. But, in that state, it becomes a fact of experience. I realize I am free. Vedanta doesn't speak of salvation. It speaks of freedom. Are you free? Are you free? Learn to be free. Even within the limits of day-to-day life, we can be free. You can express that freedom. What a beautiful idea! A free mind, a free life, if it is genuine, it will never harm somebody else's freedom. If it is not genuine, it may happen otherwise. But real freedom is what enhances freedom of others as well. Be free, be free, is the constant exhortation of Vedanta to all humanity. So, here is that great verse. I like it the way it is put:

Tadbuddhayaḥ tadātmānaḥ tanniṣṭhāḥ tatparāyaṇāḥ;
Gacchantyapunarāvṛttim jñānanirdhūta kalmaṣāḥ —

Jñāna fire destroys all *kalmaṣāḥ* or evils. Yesterday, I committed a sin. Ten years ago, I had committed a sin. All these will be destroyed when a bit of *jñāna* comes. What Sri Ramakrishna said, if a room or cave is dark for a thousand years, does it take a thousand years to light it up? Just strike a matchstick. Instantly, all darkness goes away; immediately it becomes lighted. That is the nature of knowledge. That is why our whole Indian culture praises knowledge very highly. And India was very devoted to knowledge! Every type of knowledge—worldly knowledge or spiritual knowledge. Up to 1000 AD, this country was very devoted to the acquisition of knowledge, and to expansion of human life. Later on, came a contraction of human life. A contraction which went almost to the point of death, national death, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Out of that we have come out. Now we are again in that expansive state. This philosophy will sustain us in this great struggle. Knowledge, more knowledge, still more knowledge of all levels. Out of that will come excellence of character, excellence of work, excellence of conduct. This is how we build up a new destiny for ourselves. That is the importance of this wonderful statement. It may refer to the great *sādhakas* or those who undertake spiritual practices, who realize this truth, but it may refer to you and me also at our level. At every level, any greatness in any field, should depend upon this sense expressed in this verse. *Tadbuddhayaḥ tadātmānaḥ tanniṣṭhāḥ tatparāyaṇāḥ*. A burnt seed, if you put in the soil, won't sprout again. So also, *jñāna* burns away all *kalmaṣāḥ* or evils within the system. Then that entity cannot be reborn again, because all its evil tendencies

inside have been burnt away through the power of *jñāna* or spiritual knowledge which has been compared to fire, *jñānāgni,* earlier. That is how this is constantly emphasized in Vedanta. Freedom, freedom—here and not in a future life. In many aspects of our earlier teaching, it had been often told in the beginning that you get freedom in a future life, after you die. Somehow you believed that in this life you have achieved some spiritual development, but for real freedom you will have to wait for a future existence. That became changed in the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*. In Vedanta came this profound teaching of *Jīvanmukti,* 'freedom while being alive'. And that is what is being proclaimed in the *Gītā*, in the Upaniṣads, in Śaṅkarācārya's writings, and today, in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature also. What is the use of living a wretched life here, and getting a future blessed state later on? Why not now? Why not enjoy the best here? The immortal Atman is our very nature. That was the realization that motivated these great sages. So, having said this, the next *śloka* gives us a marvellous truth! That is the very *soul* of this *Gītā*. When do we attain that state? How do we express that state in life? These are expressed in this verse.

विद्याविनयसंपन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।
शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिता: समदर्शिन:॥१८॥

Vidyā vinaya sampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini;
Śuni caiva śvapāke ca paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ — 5. 18

'The *paṇḍitas* or knowers of the Self look with an equal eye on a *brāhmaṇa* endowed with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and an eater of dogs (low-caste person).'

You become a *paṇḍita*, one whose knowledge has grasped the truth of the Atman. A *paṇḍita* is a *samadarśī,* 'who sees all with an equal eye'. No high and low in his or her eye. Everybody is the same Atman. That is expressed with a little more detail by saying, *vidyā vinaya sampanne brāhmaṇe*, 'in a *brāhmaṇa* who is endowed with *vidyā* and *vinaya,* knowledge and humility'; *gavi,* 'in the cow'; *hastini,* 'in the elephant'; *śuni,* 'in the dog'; *śvapāke,* 'who eats the dog', who, in India was called in the earlier social thinking, a *caṇḍāla; paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ,* 'the *paṇḍitas* see as equal' all of them. That *brāhmaṇa* and that dog, he or she doesn't make

any distinction. Why? Because, the same Atman is in all of them. So, distinctions vanish. In ignorance, you find difference between things; in knowledge, you find unity. That is a great truth in Vedanta. Ignorance leads to diversity. Knowledge leads to unity. This will be discussed later in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters while dealing with *sāttvika, rājasika* and *tāmasika* knowledge. Our senses reveal diversity, but knowledge reveals unity. Even in physical science, take all the various items of experience in any particular scientific field. Everything is different from each other in the beginning. As you investigate, you find basic unity emerging between things. So, the world has come from Brahman; when one realizes that Brahman and looks out, he or she sees the same Brahman everywhere.

So, the statement: *vidyā vinaya sampanne brāhmaṇe*. It is easy to see God in a person who is holy and pure. But, how to see Him in a dog, in an ordinary person, even in a criminal, in a prostitute? How is it possible? Yes, this person has achieved that universal vision. In Sri Ramakrishna's *Gospel,* you read: he saw Brahman in dogs, in cats, in human beings, in the prostitute standing out there, in every one of them. And he saluted every one of them; this happened in our own time. These are not mere words, these are not theories, these have been demonstrated again and again. So, *samadarśitva,* 'seeing all as equal', is a profound message of the *Gītā*. And it is also the very soul of democracy. Any kind of hierarchical consideration goes against the spirit of democracy. *Samadarśitva* should be there. Here in the Vedanta, and in this chapter of the *Gītā*, this is a big theme. The physical eyes cannot reveal this *samadarśitva* or *samatva*. Eyes reveal only differences. But the mind, when it becomes pure, can penetrate through these appearances and discover the pulsing of unity behind all diversity. That is the unique human capacity. Such a person is called a *paṇḍita. Paṇḍā* means *ātmaviṣayā buddhiḥ,* '*buddhi* that has the Atman as its object of knowledge', says Śaṅkarācārya. One who has that *buddhi* is called a *paṇḍita.* What a high meaning this word has! But, today this word has lost that high status and has come to mean a language teacher or even a cook. Swami Vivekananda was very fond of this expression *samadarśi*. When he was in the Maharaja's palace at Khetri in Rajasthan during his wandering days, the Maharaja arranged for a singing session by a nautch girl; a good

singer. The Maharaja sent word to Swamiji, 'Please come, you will love the music. She sings very well.' Swamiji said, 'I am a *sannyāsin*, why should I go to listen to a nautch girl's music?' That was Swamiji's first reaction. The singer was deeply grieved when she heard this, and sang, as it were in reply, a song of Surdas, the blind Vaishnava poet saint. The song's main theme was this *samadarśitva.* The first line is:

Mere avaguṇa citta na dharo samadarśi ho nām tihāro —

'O Lord, do not look upon my evil qualities, Your name is same-sightedness, i.e. *samadarśitva.*'

When Swamiji heard the song, he was deeply moved. And he said, 'I am a *sannyāsin*, I made a distinction between this person and that person, that this is a nautch girl, this is somebody else, etc. She has taught me real Vedanta today.' He forthwith went to the hall of audience and joined the party. When the music was over, she came to Swamiji to make pranams to him, and Swamiji blessed her. Swamiji himself has told the story of this event. Our whole country needs to understand this truth of *samadarśitva,* because all our social life is riddled through and through with its opposite. We never had *samadarśitva,* only *a-samadarśitva,* inequality, high and low, hierarchical considerations, etc.

However, in the modern age, Swamiji said, we shall make this Vedanta the sheet anchor of our society. A new society we shall evolve where this *samadarśitva* will be there. And when India became free, she adopted a Constitution, a democratic republican Constitution, of which this *samadarśitva* is the very soul. Distinction between one and another as a citizen is abolished. Every citizen is equal to every other citizen. We have to look at him or her in that attitude of oneness. Unfortunately, we do it now only during elections. We forget it immediately after the elections. A candidate will go to a poor old lower caste woman and say, 'Madam, please come and vote for me, you are all a part of our democracy, we are all one.' That is how democracy functions. But, I am sorry to say, it functions so only once a while. Afterwards, you are you, and I am I. That is the attitude later on. That will change when political democracy is strengthened by spiritual democracy, through the great spiritual teachings of Vedanta. When these teachings go to the people, they will realize that this is not a mere

political arrangement. This is a constant spiritual attitude. We have to maintain it, cultivate it. That is how, I have every hope, with Vedanta as the great philosophy behind us, with Swami Vivekananda as the expounder of that great philosophy and its practical implications, our democracy will develop that soulfulness, that spiritual enrichment, which very few democracies in the world have. We have that opportunity this time.

So, the next *Gītā śloka* is going to be on this subject of *samadarśitva. Paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ. Paṇḍitas* are *samadarśis.* And we all have the organic capacity to understand that truth of *samadarśitva* and live according to it. If a leader follows a path, we all will also follow that. There is such a thing as mimetic tendency in society. Whatever great persons do, we also do. Because our leaders practised only inequality all this time, we all practise inequality. The *brāhmaṇa* practised inequality. And what is the result? Even the *caṇḍāla* is practising inequality with respect to still lower people.

In Bangalore, in the 1930's, I saw two types of *caṇḍālas: eḍakai mādiga* 'left handed *mādiga*' and *valakai mādiga*, 'right handed *mādiga*'*;* one will not touch the other, because they have all followed that long-standing teaching and practice, that example that was given to them by the higher castes. Now, if the example changes at the top, everything will change at the bottom also. There will be real equality everywhere. No superiority to anyone, except what is given to you by people's consent. A minister has a certain status. Prime Minister also has a status, both given by the Constitution, given by the people. There is no harm in that. But, even then, he or she should not think, I am someone superior. He must go to the people, become one with them. That is real democracy. So far as socio-poltical democracy is concerned, the Scandinavian nations are the most advanced in this matter. When I was on a four month lecture tour of 17 European countries in 1961, I observed that even the king of Norway or Sweden will go shopping, and no kind of traffic jam will be there. They are just like other citizens. There you can see social democracy as a fact. It will take quite a bit of time for us in India to come to that high level. But that is the goal in this modern age of India's history, according to Swami Vivekananda. And therefore, in the next verse this idea is put in a stronger language:

इहैव तैर्जितः सर्गो येषां साम्ये स्थितं मनः ।
निर्दोषं हि समं ब्रह्म तस्माद्ब्रह्मणि ते स्थिताः ॥१९॥

Ihaiva tairjitaḥ sargo yeṣām sāmye sthitam manaḥ;
Nirdoṣam hi samam brahma tasmād brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ—5. 19

'(Relative) existence has been conquered by them, even in this world, whose mind rests in sameness, since Brahman is the same in all and is without imperfection; therefore, they indeed rest in Brahman.'

This is a very great verse, the soul of this chapter. *Ihaiva*, 'here itself', in this world, in this body itself; *tairjitaḥ sargo,* 'they have conquered relativity'; *yeṣām sāmye sthitam manaḥ*, 'whose mind is established in this *sāmya sthiti,* this vision of equality, this oneness'. *Nirdoṣam hi samam brahma*, 'Brahman is free from all evils', and is equal in all. *Tasmād brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ*, 'therefore, they are established in Brahman'. The great importance is, *ihaiva tairjitaḥ sargo*, 'here itself they have conquered relativity, birth and death.'

Sarga means 'without our choice we are put into a body-mind complex.' We have no choice in the matter. We have no freedom. We become a creature. Just like a prisoner who has no freedom. He or she is put into a prison, and cannot come out. He or she is not free there. So, our birth is of that nature, we didn't choose it; it has come to us. Now, it is a challenge to us. This kind of birth—*sarga* means birth of this nature where helplessness comes in; that will end when you realize Brahman. That is the central theme of the *śloka*. If you freely choose a birth, that is beautiful. When a person is taken to a jail for some crime, he or she has no freedom to go in or to come out. But, if somebody goes to jail, freely, to do some great good to the people, that is beautiful. Gandhiji went to jail. Why? In order to secure release for millions of people from the jail of political slavery. In the nineteenth century, a British citizen, Canon Wilber Force, if I remember right, did a formal crime and went to jail; there he studied the wretched condition of the helpless prisoners. On release from prison, he gave wide publicity to this situation; and the result was prison reforms.

That *sarga* is welcome. This *sarga,* where we are helpless, is a challenge to us. Why are we here? How can we be free? We have to take up this challenge. That is what Vedanta speaks about in dealing with the human situation. So, this *śloka* says, when you struggle in this way and seek for freedom from being a creature of the birth-and-death process, you come ultimately to this realization. And in this very life one realizes it, 'whose mind is fixed in sameness, same-sightedness'. Why? 'Brahman, the infinite consciousness, is free from all evil and equal in all'. Brahman is *sama,* equal, in all. Therefore, those who realize this truth, 'they exist in Brahman'. Now, this word Brahman is a great word in Vedanta. Vedanta says that no word can explain, or indicate, the highest Reality. But, we have to use some word. The Upaniṣads therefore used two words: Brahman and Atman. So far as the infinite cosmos is concerned, they discovered its unity in Brahman, the infinite. So far as the human being is concerned, they discovered his or her true nature also as the Atman, the infinite pure Consciousness. And the next great discovery was that this Atman and this Brahman, being pure Consciousness, are one and the same. There cannot be plurality in consciousness. That was a tremendous conclusion arrived at by the great sages of the Upaniṣads. Plurality is impossible with respect to Consciousness. There is no evidence, there is no proof. That is why in modern times, nuclear scientist Schrodinger, particularly stressed this point by saying that Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is inconceivable. That plurality that you attribute to it is because of the different body-mind complexes in which Consciousness manifests. Consciousness is not plural, but the bodies, in which Consciousness manifests, are plural. And therefore multiplicity is wrongly attributed to Consciousness. Really, Consciousness is one and indivisible, just like space.

That is the great conclusion of Vedanta; and this conclusion of the infinite Consciousness, one and non-dual, which unites everything in this world, is slowly getting expounded more and more by Western scientists today. Physicists, psychologists, medical scientists, and those who deal with environmental problems, everyone of them is slowly coming to this unity behind the diversity. Intimate relationship of everything with each other, and that unity is something spiritual. The Atman is pure Consciousness, Brahman is pure Consciousness. So, the Upaniṣads speak of the world

coming out of Brahman in one place and from Atman in another place. It is one in you, in me, in all. This subject is slowly becoming attractive to those people in the West today who deal with ecology and environmental problems. They see a unity behind all this diversity. And that unity is a spiritual unity. The word spiritual comes again and again in many books written by these great thinkers. So, they are travelling upon the road that have been travelled earlier by the great sages of the Upaniṣads, and they will come to the same conclusions.

What is the definition of Brahman? The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* asks this question. And it answers (II. i. 1): *satyam jñānam anantam brahma,* 'Brahman is *satyam,* truth, *jñānam,* consciousness, *anantam,* infinity'. There are no two. It is infinite and non-dual. Now, this is the conclusion towards which modern Western thought is proceeding. They are advanced thinkers who are not tied down to the materialistic dogmas of science, and they are increasing in number. Any number of books are coming out. So, this *śloka* has tremendous significance from that point of view. When you realize this truth of Brahman or Atman, you become free. You are no more *a creature*. That is the idea of *brahmajñāna,* 'knowledge of Brahman'—a wonderful word in Vedantic literature. Some of the great utterances of the Upaniṣads refer to this great truth. In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (II. ii. 11)*,* there is this verse which is uttered with a sense of ecstasy after realizing this truth: *Brahmaivedam amṛtam,* 'this manifested universe is nothing but Brahman, the immortal'. Things and beings are mortal, but Brahman, that exists in all of them, is immortal. So, *idam* means 'this manifested universe'. Then the Upaniṣad expands it, *purastād brahma,* 'in front is Brahman'; *paścāt brahma,* 'behind is Brahman'; *dakṣiṇataścottareṇa,* 'right and left'; *adhaścordhvam ca prasṛtam,* 'it spreads above as well as below'. And finally, it ends up with a wonderful note: *brahmaivedam viśvamidam variṣṭham,* 'this whole universe is nothing but Brahman, the supremely adored one'.

Now, that is the Brahman referred to in this *Gītā* verse 19. Those who have realized Brahman, they realize the spirit of unity, the spirit of harmony. When we deal with the body, we find lots of differences. No two people are alike so far as body is concerned. The Vedantic search for the truth behind this world started from the sensory level, and at the sensory

level we see nothing but differences. Everything is different, so much so that, diversity is the truth about the world viewed from the sensory point of view. Then out of this come all the evils in society; evils of violence, crime, and one of those evils that afflict even today: human society's caste and racial superiority attitudes, including South African White's racial superiority attitude. Out of this the world is slowly evolving a human sense of oneness, a humankind awareness, obliterating these differences, which are not negated, but which are said to be only on the surface. Deep down, there is unity. Outwardly there are these differences, we don't deny. Even the difference between man and woman. But behind both is one infinite Self. That is our true nature. *Tat tvam asi,* 'you are That' as the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* expresses it. Now, when this truth comes into operation in society, you will find greater integration of human beings with human beings and nature. And today that integration process is going to be international in scope. We are all one. Imagine what was man thinking fifty years ago and what it is today! Pre-war thought and, post-war thought. Pre-war was full of differences, full of superiority, inferiority and exploitation; all that was going on. But in post-war conditions, things have changed. A search for unity, giving up of racial superiority, or every other kind of superiority, even masculine superiority over women. When that is being banished, step by step, whereto are we moving? What is its direction?

It is that direction that Vedanta supplies to the entire movement of thought in the modern age. For, in these Upaniṣads and in the *Gītā*, you are in the presence of great sages who took up this problem ages ago, three to four thousand years ago, and discovered this profound truth of absolute spiritual unity and oneness, and the more you realize it, the happier you will be, the more fulfilled you will be. The more you stress on differences, the more sufferings you will have. So, human life has to be geared in this direction. *Ihaiva tairjitaḥ sargo yeṣām sāmye sthitam manaḥ*. 'If one is established in *sāmya,* he or she conquers relativity here itself;' not in any heaven but in this very world. We are all one and the same; you are a human being, I am a human being. Today, we speak of homo sapiens. Humanity is one. Biologically it is one. Modern biology describes humanity as a single inter-thinking and inter-breeding species. That unity has been discovered in biology; so we are essentially one. Therefore, develop that

sāmya attitude. Don't look to the differences in wealth, power and position. Now this is still a speculative venture; but, it is the truth behind it that takes you to the idea of Brahman and Atman. Behind this body-mind complex is the infinite spiritual Reality called Atman, and it is one in all of us, 'existing undivided in things apparently divided'. That is the language of the *Gītā,* a few chapters later. Bodies are divided, but the Atman is undivided. We are all one. Love comes only when we realize this sense of unity. Wherever there is separateness, it is difficult to bring love into the picture. So, love, compassion, and all such positive virtues can manifest when we obliterate these external differences and stress the basic unity behind all this. That is the meaning of this *śloka*, and the world is going in that direction. Brahman is *sama;* in all beings it is present in 'equal measure'. Nobody has more of it, nobody has less of it. Remember this beautiful idea: Brahman's presence in all of us is equal. In none more and in none less. See the wonderful truth. *Brahma nirdoṣam,* 'free from all evil is Brahman'. Brahman is absolutely pure, ever-free, and it is equal in all of us. That is the most profound truth Vedanta conveys to all of us; whether it is the human being, whether it is an animal, insect, or trees and plants, or even rocks and minerals, everywhere the same infinite Consciousness is present in its wholeness. This is the truth which the Upaniṣads had discovered and all human beings can discover it. By that discovery, they reach the goal of human evolution. All this long evolution has a goal. This is that goal. Realize universality by realizing this Brahman which is *nirdoṣam,* 'free from evil', and *samam,* 'equal', in all beings. *Tasmāt,* 'therefore'; *te,* 'those who realize this truth'; *brahmaṇi sthitāḥ*, 'are established in Brahman'.

What a beautiful conception! We are established in the body as separate from each other. A few people are established in Brahman, and have realized their oneness with all. So, that is the difference between ordinary life and the highest spiritual attainment. In many places in the *Gītā*, this idea will be expressed from different angles, from different points of view. So, this is a *śloka*, which is in tune with the great urge in modern civilization. As I said, after the Second World War, we are proceeding in that direction. What a difference between 19th century and 20th century from this point of view! In the last century, what kind of differences we cultivated, how much exploitation of one person by another went on. That

is why this new thought development, probably through the suffering of war and violence, has taken place, and we are on the road to human unity and harmony.

न प्रहृष्येत् प्रियं प्राप्य नोद्विजेत्प्राप्य चाप्रियम् ।
स्थिरबुद्धिरसंमूढो ब्रह्मविद्ब्रह्मणि स्थितः ॥२०॥

Na prahṛṣyet priyam prāpya nodvijet prāpya cāpriyam;
Sthirabuddhirasammūḍho brahmavid brahmaṇi sthitaḥ— 5. 20

'Resting in Brahman, with intellect steady, and without delusion, the knower of Brahman neither rejoices on receiving what is pleasant, nor grieves on receiving what is unpleasant.'

This person is established in Brahman, because he or she has that sameness in attitude. *Na prahṛṣyet priyam prāpya*, 'does not become over-elated when something advantageous comes to him or her.' *Nodvijet prāpya cāpriyam,* 'nor does one become depressed when something disadvantageous comes to him or her'. *Na udvijet,* 'don't get emotionally upset'. *Sthirabuddhiḥ,* 'with the *buddhi* which has become steady'. *Asammūḍho,* 'not at all deluded'; *brahmavit,* 'that knower of Brahman'; *brahmaṇi sthitaḥ,* 'is established in Brahman'. To be established in Brahman is the great objective of human life. That alone is where you are steady, you are free, and you are full. You are fulfilled only in that state. In every other state, you are not fulfilled, only partly fulfilled and many things remain unfulfilled. But once you establish yourself in Brahman, the all, you become the all. That is fulfilment. And I am using the word *fulfilment* here because it has come into biology in this century, in this post-war period; Sir Julian Huxley accepts that the goal of human evolution is fulfilment, not merely organic satisfaction which is the goal of animal life. But, at the human level, organic satisfaction is secondary; primary thing is fulfilment. Are you fulfilled? When you realize Brahman you can say, I am fulfilled. There is nothing more for me to attain. *Kṛtakṛtya* and *kṛtārtha,* are the two words in Sanskrit to indicate that state. What ought to be done being born as a human being has been done, and being a fulfilled individual—these are the meanings of these words, *kṛtakṛtya* and *kṛtārtha*. *Bhagavān* Buddha, when he achieved spiritual illumination or *bodhi,* stood up and used the

same word, ‘I have achieved what ought to be achieved being born a human being. I am fulfilled. I am fulfilled.’ That means he became full, and out of that fullness, he shared something with the world, that blessed millions of lives thereby. So, this is a great direction of human evolution. *Brahmavit brahmaṇi sthitaḥ,* ‘such a knower of Brahman is established in Brahman’. What a wonderful idea! To be established in Brahman. We can establish ourselves in very many grounds which are shaky. That kind of life we have day-to-day, but here you are firmly based.

One example and parable given by Jesus in the *New Testament* is beautiful. ‘A foolish man built his house on sand, and the rains descended, the floods came, the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell. And great was its fall.’ That is called *pratiṣṭhā*, or establishment, on sand; it is loose, it cannot sustain the house. ‘But a wise man built his house on rock, and the rains descended, the floods came, the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not. Because it was founded on a rock.’ Can this human life be founded on something like a rock which will never shake, which will never break? There is; and that state is called *brāhmīsthiti.* In the second chapter of the *Gītā,* the last nineteen verses refer to the *sthitaprajña,* ‘one whose mind is constant and steady’, because it has realized Brahman. That is a great series of verses at the end of the second chapter. Here also, the idea comes. *Brahmavit brahmaṇi sthitaḥ,* ‘a knower of Brahman is fully established and steady in Brahman’. Even to think of this, to meditate on this, is a great experience. We are far away from it. What does it matter? That is the ideal. Much of human life today is full of suffering, because it has no goal. It has no direction. It is simply moving here and there. But here at last life gets a direction, and that too, towards fulfilment. Let me go in that direction. One step, two steps, as much as I can. That is how these ideals are to be preached to everyone. Place no barriers to neighbourliness. Feel your oneness with all. How can crime and delinquency ever come, or even tensions and breakdowns come, when such knowledge comes to children as well as to grown ups? So, this is how Vedanta exhorts humanity today: Place your life under the guidance of the highest philosophy—experiential, not speculative, and live as much of it as you can, and continue to progress step by step. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, there are millions of normal human beings living at the sensory level. And that sensory apparatus

controls them, limits them, and makes them separate from each other. They have to treat it as a challenge. That is a great Vedantic exhortation.

बाह्यस्पर्शेष्वसक्तात्मा विन्दत्यात्मनि यत्सुखम् ।
स ब्रह्मयोगयुक्तात्मा सुखमक्षयमश्नुते ॥२१॥

Bāhyasparśeṣu asaktātmā vindatyātmani yat sukham;
Sa brahmayogayuktātmā sukham akṣayam aśnute — 5. 21

'With the heart unattached to external contacts, one realizes the joy that is in the Self; with the heart devoted to the meditation on Brahman, he or she attains undecaying happiness.'

Verse 21 gives us this great teaching: *bāhya sparśeṣu asaktātmā*, 'with the heart unattached to external contacts'; why should that external object be my master? Ask this question. For the animal there is no other way. They can't overcome that situation. But a human being can. He or she needn't remain a slave to all the external things that are there. The Self in him or her is of far greater value than all the values that he or she finds outside. This truth shines upon one's mind during war times. When refugees leave a war zone, observe what they do. They throw away one by one their priceless possessions in order to somehow save their body-mind complex; then the realization comes that life is more important than possessions. But, people forget this truth in peace time. *Bāhyasparśeṣu asaktātmā,* 'one who has no attachments to external contacts'. *Sparśa* is a great word meaning touch. There are five sense organs in a human being. One is for sight, the other is for hearing, there is one for smelling, the other is for tasting, and the last one is for touch. The most tangible of all the sense organs is the sense of touch. The word tangible itself comes from the word touch. When you touch a thing it is called tangible. And we generally consider a thing real if it is tangible. I can just touch it. Then it is real. So, reality is measured by tangibility by ordinary human minds. Things which are intangible are unreal to most people. So, extremely gross minds are very much conditioned by the skin touch. That is why it is said *bāhyasparśa,* 'external touch'; touching one's own body won't do. I want to touch something out there; that is the meaning of *bāhya.*

As a baby, it is a beautiful thing to enjoy *bāhyasparśa.* The baby needs it for its growth. The mother's skin touch to the baby is absolutely essential for the baby's sense of security and its mental development. But when we cease to be babies, we shall have to ask this question: how long shall I live at the lowest level of the sensory apparatus, at the skin touch level? Without touch, even by expressing through ear, nose, or eyes, we can still establish human relations. Touch is not that important. That is how we mentally grow one step, then another step, until the senses cease to exercise control over us. I can go beyond all of them. That is the high state of human evolution. These are all gateways. We are tied up with them, but we can go beyond them. Going beyond the sensory level is the beginning of human spiritual life. So long as one is tied up at the sensory level, one is still at the animal level only; to all appearances a human being, but actually an animal. So, *bāhyasparśeṣu asaktātmā,* 'one who is thoroughly unattached to all external contacts'; *vindati ātmani yat sukham*, 'what happiness that person enjoys in his own Self'; what I expect to get by all the sense touches, million times more than that I get from within. I didn't know this truth till now. Now I am realizing it. So, the *Gītā* says, whatever you get from outside touch, you get much more from your own Self. There is nothing to compare the joy of the Atman with the little joys that come from touch, sound, etc. That is a truth that we must realize as we become more and more mature. A baby cannot understand it. The baby lies entirely at the sensate level. As you go beyond the baby level, this truth must come to you. Without any external contact, if my mind is detached from it and inwardly touches the Atman, I enjoy an incomparable experience of bliss *within* myself. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here. The Atman is of the nature of infinite bliss. Even the joy from all external senses, says the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, is only a fraction of the bliss of the Atman coming through that particular sensory system.

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says in its chapter on 'Enquiry into Bliss': Every joy you have in life is nothing but a little fraction of the infinite joy of the Atman which is your true nature and is *ānanda svarupa*. We don't condemn these ordinary joys; only treat all of them as a fraction of the *Ātmānanda*. *Bāhyasparśeṣu asaktātmā vindati ātmani yat sukham,* 'unattached to external contacts, what *sukham* or joy one enjoys within oneself'; *sa brahma yoga yuktātmā*, 'that person who has become

connected with the source of all joy, namely, Brahman', what does such a person live by? *Sukham akṣayam aśnute,* 'such a one experiences imperishable happiness'. All types of sensory happiness are perishable; they come and they go. But this happiness is always there. That is your true nature. So, *sukham akṣayam aśnute. Sukham* means 'happiness', *akṣayam* means 'imperishable', *aśnute,* 'experiences'. This is the true direction of human evolution. We begin with joys coming from the external world, but slowly we reduce dependence on them when we begin to experience the ever-present pure joy of the Atman. That is what you see in great mystics of all religions and even in some ordinary human beings. When *Bhagavān* Buddha achieved enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, he experienced this ocean of bliss for several days under that tree. What else is freedom? Freedom is independence from the external environment. Suppose I call myself free. And somebody abuses me. And I become depressed, full of tension and depression. What has happened to my freedom? My freedom is in somebody else's pocket! He has held it there. He uttered a word and that made me unhappy and tense. Freedom is freedom from the pressure of external environment. You are established in yourself. Then you are free. Therefore, the *Gītā* says here. *Sa brahmayoga yuktātmā,* 'he or she is united with Brahman within oneself'. Such a person, *sukham akṣayam aśnute*, 'he or she enjoys imperishable happiness'.

A great teacher like *Bhagavān* Buddha, a Sri Ramakrishna; what joy they experienced welling up constantly within themselves! They did not enjoy anything outside. Wherefrom did they get this joy? If a person observes a fast on *Ekadaśi* day and remains cheerful throughout the day, that means he or she has got a little spiritual touch. Suppose one fasts and goes on complaining the whole day that he or she is being deprived of something worthwhile; such a one has not got anything new. So, whenever you give up anything outside, and remain cheerful, that shows you are in touch with the deeper Reality which is the source of all joy. That is why it is not an ascetic philosophy. It is a philosophy of fullness, of joy, of fulfilment. You give up something smaller for something better, something richer; and what is the richest? Your own infinite Self. Nothing can be compared to that. And we forget it again and again. *Today's consumerist civilization needs to understand this truth very much.* We always measure

civilization in terms of consumption of goods and services; the more, the better. And that has come under criticism today. Consumerism will destroy the whole of nature. And violated nature will also violate humanity which did that violation. These are the truths that are being impressed by thoughtful minds upon the human minds today. So, they are thinking of ways to get out of this consumerist mania? It is a real mania. And our T.V. advertisements increase this mania. As soon as somebody sees some advertisement on the T.V., the whole family will say, 'O we want that.' This is what is happening all over the world, and so, it is a world problem today, this consumerism, by which the ecological balance is being destroyed. All these sufferings are coming; even cosmic disasters are expected, and the ozone layer is getting depleted; then total life will suffer here. These are the warnings given by great thinkers today.

However, how to control this consumerist mania? If I control all this, I become a dry ascetic. That is not what Vedanta wants. You must have another source of joy. Is there such a source? Yes, there is. You have never thought about it. There is something infinite about you. The joy that comes from that source within is something which has no comparison. That is real joy. When people begin to experience it, this consumerist mania will become automatically reduced.

In Vedanta, the five sense organs of human beings are meant to deal with objects called *śabda,* sound, *sparśa,* touch, *rūpa,* form, *rasa,* taste, and *gandha,* smell. Under restraint they are helpful and friendly; otherwise, they are harmful. Ādi Śaṅkarācārya refers to this in a thought provoking verse in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (verse 76):

Śabdādibhiḥ pañcabhireva pañca
pañcatvamāpuḥ svaguṇena baddhāḥ;
Kuraṅga mātaṅga pataṅga mīna
bhṛṅgā naraḥ pañcabhirañcitaḥ kim —

'By the sense of sound and the other four sense organs, each animal, like deer, elephant, moth, fish, and bee, tied down by their respective rope of one sense-attachment, experienced death; so, what to speak of the human being who is attached to all the five sense organs!'

Sri Ramakrishna, in one of his teachings, divided human joys into three categories: *Viṣayānanda, bhajanānanda, and brahmānanda. Ānanda* means 'joy or bliss'. *Viṣaya* means 'sensory objects'. All consumerism refers to these sensory objects. 'The joy that comes from experiencing sensory objects' is called *viṣayānanda.* Vedanta does not look down upon it. It is valid, but carried beyond a certain level, it can destroy you and destroy the world. That is what we are seeing today. *Because today's materialism says there is nothing higher, we are tied down to that level. But here is a philosophy that tells all that there are higher levels of joy. Try to know them today*. When I give up enjoying something of the consumerist material, I am not left joyless. I am in search of deeper levels of joy. That second joy Sri Ramakrishna calls *bhajanānanda,* 'bliss coming from *bhajana*', from repeating God's name, singing Divine Glories; it is a purer joy. Proceeding in this direction one reaches the highest level of human development, namely, coming in touch with the bliss of Brahman that is ever within us. That joy is million times more intense than all types of joys including *viṣayānanda.* People who have experienced it alone can tell how immensely different it is from all *viṣayānanda.* In between is *bhajanānanda,* a wonderful *ānanda* or bliss. You come back refreshed from a *bhajanānanda* session, whereas, you come back refreshed and happy from *viṣayānanda,* if it is moderate, and tired, if it is too much. Some of the examples given today in various magazines and newspapers are about this thirst for *viṣayānanda.* When you go out on a week-end trip to the sea-side on a Friday, you return on Monday or Sunday evening, more tired and exhausted than before. Many journals and papers in England and America discuss this problem. There is no space on the sea-side to which many go; on the road, there is traffic jam. The whole of *viṣayānanda* is thus defeating itself today.

But a little *bhajanānanda* can give you greater refreshment and joy. Why should I go out all the time? Let me sit quiet and be myself for some time. Let me read a beautiful book. Today, many people have lost the capacity to be alone and happy and to read great books. Similarly, let me sing the name of God, enjoy music, enjoy those beautiful things. They don't cost much. And how much joy you get thereby. Above all, when a devotee of God sings *bhajan*, what wonderful joy it is! Very often people are able to sustain themselves even though many *viṣayānandas* are not available. By a

little *bhajanānanda* we feel refreshed. People forget this truth today. So, that is the second joy, *bhajanānanda.* Our country never had the problem of drunkenness. Most people never knew what is an inebriating drink, though unfortunately, after independence, we are learning it quickly and well, because the *bhajanānanda* idea is being forgotten. We used to take the name of God; after a whole day's work, when we would come back home, we would repeat the name of God, sing *Rāmnām saṅkīrtan*. Our common people did not need this external kick coming from drinks and other drugs. That joy, *bhajanānanda*, is taken away from them today. So, they have to depend upon the external joy. And what is the result? Unhappy homes, break-up of marriages, etc. So, the human being must understand how to experience joy from within. Sitting quiet itself can then be a great joy for those who know how to enjoy aloneness, not loneliness. Aloneness is a great thing. Why should I run about all the time? Let me sit by myself for some time; let me meditate; let me think of God; let me sing *bhajan.* All that constitute the sources of *bhajanānanda.* It does not cost anything, but it refreshes every time.

And the third type of bliss is called *brahmānanda,* what is referred to in this verse here. When you actually realize that infinite Brahman, what infinite joy is yours! You can't measure it at all. Immeasurable, *akṣayam*, that is the language of the *Gītā*. That is the language of Sri Ramakrishna's parable. Every joy is welcome. Vedanta does not look down upon any sensory joy. But there are joys *and* joys. There is a passage from a lower joy to a higher joy. Don't forget that. That is the warning that Vedanta gives. So, from *viṣayānanda* you must learn to achieve *bhajanānanda.* And if one is fortunate enough, if there is the grace of God on him or her, one can achieve *brahmānanda* also. But, *bhajanānanda* is the via media; it is a beautiful experience; millions of people today are seeking that *bhajanānanda.* One of the things I saw while travelling abroad is the spread of Indian *bhajans* all over the world today. Any part of the world you go to, everybody wants *bhajan. Bhajan* cassettes can be seen everywhere. Divine singing, and finding joy in it—that is a wonderful new development. We in India need it very badly today to save us from the consumerist current which destroys the consumer as well as nature. That should not happen. That is why this teaching is needed. This *śloka* has that reference.

Bāhyasparśeṣu asaktātmā vindatyātmani yat sukham. *Ātmani* means ‘in one’s own Self’. *Yat sukham,* ‘whatever happiness’ you enjoy. *Sa brahmayoga yuktātmā,* ‘who has become one with Brahman’. *Sukham akṣayam aśnute,* ‘experiences imperishable happiness’. From the sense of touch we get various types of pleasures and happiness. But, the real test of human maturity is getting free from the need for that happiness coming exclusively from touch. Go higher and higher. There are more subtle human relationships. It is like two types of people sitting together; one type constantly chattering. Without it there is dryness. There is another type of people living together for days and months without a word being exchanged. Yet their hearts are always pulsing together with joy. Now, these are all parts of human experience. We have forgotten these higher dimensions of human possibilities.

It is written in the life of Swami Brahmananda that he and another disciple of Sri Ramakrishna lived together for months in Vrindavan without exchanging a word. But they were all the while close to each other; their hearts were pulsing together. That state is absolutely possible. But in the early stages of one’s life, we need to talk with others; the first few months after marriage, the husband and wife need a good deal of talking. But once the married life is well established, they don’t need much of talking. That shows a maturity of mind that has come at that stage.

There are thus grades of human happiness. We must always try to go to the next grade. Vedanta never condemns any type of pleasure. It only says, there are still higher grades. If you stay put in one, you are depriving yourself of higher types of joys which are waiting for you. This is the language of Vedanta, which has been strengthened by the beautiful exhortation of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* as freely rendered by Swami Vivekananda: ‘Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached’. There is so much to achieve. If you have achieved something, march on, something still greater is there. As a baby I played with toys. ‘O! I enjoyed it immensely.’ I remember, as a child, I used to be forgetful of the whole world when I played. But, if one continues like that, even though one is grown up, it is something unhappy, tragic. How many other joys are waiting for you! Go to the school, develop knowledge and understanding. That is a higher joy. Mental joy is something higher. Then the highest, experiencing

the joy of realizing your own infinite Self, *Ātmānanda.* What a wonderful concept of human possibilities Vedanta presents in this context! So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the next verse:

ये हि संस्पर्शजा भोगा दु:खयोनय एव ते ।
आद्यन्तवन्त: कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुध: ॥२२॥

Ye hi samsparśajā bhogā duḥkhayonaya eva te;
Ādyantavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ — 5. 22

'Since enjoyments that are skin-contact-born are sources of misery alone, and have a beginning and an end, O son of Kuntī, a wise person does not seek pleasure in them.'

This is the conclusion on this subject. *Samsparśajā bhogā*, 'pleasures coming from external contact', they are called *samsparśajā; samsparśa* and *sparśa* mean the same thing, 'external skin contact'. All such pleasures have one defect: *ādyantavantaḥ,* 'they have a beginning and an end'. You can't always have them. You miss them. Besides, *duḥkhayonaya eve te,* 'they become sources of pain or sorrow'. You can't have only pleasure; pain also will come. Life is a constant movement between pleasure and pain. The English poet John Keats has expressed it thus in his *Ode to Melancholy*:

Ay, in the very temple of Delight

Veil'd Melancholy has her Sovran shrine!

In one of the poems of the great Sanskrit dramatist, Kālidāsa, in his *Meghadūta*, 'Cloud Messenger', occurs this truth:(verse 113)

Kasya atyantam sukham upanatam duḥkham ekāntato vā;
Nicaiḥ gacchat upari ca daśā cakra nemi krameṇa —

'Who has continuous happiness? Who has got continuous sorrow? Our situation goes up and down like the *nemi* or rim of a wheel.'

That is a constant truth about human life. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is expressing that idea. *Ye hi samsparśajā bhogā duḥkhayonaya eva te,* 'pleasures coming out of sense contact are the sources of *duḥkha* or sorrow; *ādyantavantaḥ*

kaunteya, 'Arjuna, they have a beginning, they have an end'. Therefore, what is the way to deal with it? *Na teṣu ramate budhaḥ,* 'a mature mind or a wise mind will not take delight in them'. All this is dealing with the actual human situation. When we study ourselves and our various reactions, we come to understand so many new things about oneself and one's possibilities. It is good to know what are the possibilities that are hidden within oneself. We need a science of human possibilities, said Sir Julian Huxley; and Vedanta is just that, very ancient and yet very modern. As mentioned before, *viṣayānanda, bhajanānanda,* and *brahmānanda,* all the three are human possibilities. Therefore, we should keep in view these various grades of joys that are there, and pass on from one to the other. Don't stay put too long at one particular level. Avoid stagnation. Don't stagnate, is the constant exhortation of the Vedantic teachings. Don't stagnate, says also modern biology about human evolution.

Now we shall take up the remaining verses in this chapter. What a beautiful chapter, and the next *śloka* 23 is a wonderful verse. I recite it in my mind so many times; anybody can do so, and gain great strength thereby.

Every creature is seeking happiness or bliss. Only a human being can seek this bliss at higher and higher levels. All other creatures, seek only at the physical level. That is why the word used was *sparśa. Bāhyasparśeṣu asaktātmā,* 'one who is unattached to the *bāhyasparśa* or external contact'; contact by the grossest sense organ in a human being, namely, the sense of touch, without control, reduces any human being to the animal stage. Above the sense organs we have the psychic system, much subtler than the sensory system. But the subtlest of all is the Atman, the divine Self that is within all. It is from there that all the happiness that we experience comes to us. We have to go up in that direction. That is progress. And that depends upon a certain discipline of the sensory energies in the human being. If one doesn't do so, he or she will be in trouble. We have to seek for something higher and higher, and that possibility exists; this is all what our Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* have said. As I said earlier, the only clarion call to humanity given by Vedanta is, march on, march on. Don't stay put at a particular level. There are higher possibilities waiting for you to unfold, within yourself. That is how we go beyond the sensory system, the psychic system, and beyond all

this, discover the infinite Atman of the nature of pure consciousness. There, *in the Atman, all these subtlety, immensity, and inwardness reach their infinite dimension*. That is our true nature. This limited human being is limited only when you look at him or her from the sensory point of view. When you feel, touch, see or hear, you feel he or she is a very limited being. But if you can penetrate this external psychophysical structure, you will find something tremendous within that person. He or she will be found to be infinite, immortal.

This truth is proclaimed by a sage addressing all humanity (*Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad,* 4. 3):

Tvam strī tvam pumān asi tvam kumāra uta vā kumārī;
Tvam jīrṇo daṇḍena vañcasi tvam jāto bhavasi viśvato mukhaḥ —

'You are the women, you are the man, you are the boy and you are the girl; you are the old man tottering on his stick, you are born in various universal forms.'

In the same Upaniṣad, a young sage addresses all humanity as *amṛtasya putrāḥ,* 'children of immortality' (*Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad,* 2. 5). But at the sensory level, we are not *amṛtasya putrāḥ.* All the evils in life, along with its share of joy, come from the sensory level. But a human being must be able to rise above this to something deeper, more subtle and more steady. And the highest is to realize the divine that is within all of us. This truth is placed before us and we are asked to go in that direction for our own good, for the good of society. It is in such a situation only that there can be peace within and peace without. All crime and delinquency come from the sensory level of life, and partly from the psychic level. Along with pleasure, lot of evil also comes from that level. So, we have to go a little deeper. And having gone deeper, and got in touch with the deeper dimension of Reality within, then you can function again at the sensory level *in a masterly way*, doing immense good to society. That is how the *Gītā* places before us the total vision of our life, how to shape it, which we have to do ourselves. That is the main education that one gives unto oneself with or without the help of others. This is the importance of verse 22. In modern civilization, money plays the biggest part. Every physical consumption means more and more money. Since people want more and more consumer goods, so people want

more and more money. Since you can't get that money in a normal way, you get it by cheating others, cheating the government, stealing or robbing, or in whatever way you can. Today that is one sad aspect of the human situation.

The only way to get out of this situation, to redeem humanity from this weakness, is to tell him or her, again and again, what tremendous possibilities are lying hidden within them, and direct his or her attention in that direction. That is what the *Gītā* is doing. Ours, today, is a highly consumer oriented world civilization. And all the problems arising from this civilization, we can see in plenty all around us. So, some way must be found to get out of it. The *Gītā* gives you that direction. It is the study of the human being in depth, and investing human energies for higher and higher stages of evolution. There is a direction of human evolution; that direction is fulfilment. That is what we have to achieve. That development is possible for all humanity through the spread of Vedantic ideas in the context of modern physical science. In modern philosophy of civilization, there is no direction at all. It is simply going round and round. Same thing again and again. That is what is happening today. Therefore, there is aimlessness everywhere. And men and women without aim, without direction, can be the sources of much tension, sorrow, unfulfilment, and they can project the same on to society. And we are having such a society even in our own great India, which has a fund of tested wisdom, and much of rational thinking available to uplift the whole human society. In verse 23, this subject will be presented in a remarkable way, which as I said previously, I often repeat in my mind and find out deeper and deeper meanings. That is the importance of this verse 23, where Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

शक्नोतीहैव यः सोढुं प्राक् शरीरविमोक्षणात् ।
कामक्रोधोद्भवं वेगं स युक्तः स सुखी नरः ॥२३॥

Śaknoti ihaiva yaḥ soḍhum prāk śarīra vimokṣaṇāt;
Kāmakrodhodbhavam vegam sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ —5. 23

'One who can withstand in this life, before the liberation from the body, the current arising from lust and anger, he or she is a *yogī*, he or she is a happy human being.'

A remarkable verse. *Śaknoti,* 'whoever is capable', *ihaiva,* 'in this very life', in this very body, not in some heaven; *soḍhum,* 'to withstand'. What do you withstand? *Vegam,* 'the tremendous current'. What kind of current? *Kāmakrodhodbhavam,* 'arising from *kāma* and *krodha*', sensory craving as well as anger. These are powerful forces which can take you off your feet; it can destroy a whole life. That is the nature of this current. Therefore, 'those people who can withstand this tremendous current of *kāma* and *krodha* here, in this very life, before the death of this body', *śaknoti ihaiva yaḥ soḍhum prāk śarīravimokṣaṇāt*. After death nothing can be done. Only before death we can achieve this. *Prāk* means 'before'. *Śarīravimokṣaṇa* means 'liberation from the body'. The *Gītā* asks all human beings to realize their own inner possibilities and learn to be free, learn to withstand all these various currents within us. What is the achievement thereby? *Sa yuktaḥ,* 'he or she is a *yogī*', *sa sukhī naraḥ,* 'he or she is a happy human being'. If happiness is to be sought after, you have to achieve this particular strength to withstand the currents that take us this way, that way, making us mere slaves of various forces acting within ourselves. Where is freedom? And where is happiness? 'Without tranquillity within, where is happiness?', *aśāntasya kutaḥ śukham?* Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said this in the second chapter of the *Gītā*.

Where is happiness for the mind that has not become peaceful and tranquil, which is shaken all the time like a wind blowing across a forest of trees, and trees are falling down here, there, everywhere? That kind of human life, how poor it is! But there is also the well-rooted tree; winds blow, but it can stand. If it is rooted in the surface, quickly it falls down. A similar teaching of Jesus we discussed a few pages earlier. So, there is such a thing as getting rooted in the truth that is hidden within us. That life is steady, that life is strong; we will see that person absolutely calm and steady even in difficult circumstances. Wherefrom does he or she get that energy? From a deeper level, from one's own true nature. And so, in this *śloka*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us: *Śaknoti ihaiva yaḥ soḍhum prāk śarīra vimokṣaṇāt*; that is a wonderful expression. Much of religion promises only post-mortem achievements. That kind of religion has no place in the *Gītā*. It is all *ihaiva, ihaiva,* 'here itself, here itself'. Youthful energy has to be disciplined to rise to higher levels; energy is less and less in old age. If water flows in a river,

you can put a dam, create a big lake, make hydel channels for electricity generation as well as agriculture; but if there is no water in the river, what is the use of putting a dam? And so, in old age, there is no energy. In youth there is energy. It is then that we need this tremendous channelization of human energy. First, to serve other human beings; second, to achieve spiritual growth and fulfilment.

This is the picture of human development and fulfilment that the Gītā presents to all humanity. When one is young, if that energy goes on pushing him or her here and there, making the person do bad things, anti-social things, then that way human life becomes very miserable, a tragedy. The human being has to discipline oneself to increase the quality and direction of his or her energy. The river needs disciplining by human beings; the river cannot discipline itself. It flows on. And when there is a flood, it destroys houses, destroys fields, destroys harvest, it brings so much calamity to humanity. So, the human being knows how to control rivers, which were wild before, and produce electricity and do irrigation. The same thing a human being must do with one's own energy system and one has to do it by oneself. In the verse, these two words, *kāma* and *krodha,* are used. Actually, there are six items; they are called the six enemies of human beings when unrestrained, and I have described them in the third chapter. They are called *ṣaḍripu* in Sanskrit. *Ripu* means enemy. *ṣaḍ* means six. Six enemies of man; nowhere outside, all within. First is *kāma*, unrestrained lust; second is *krodha,* anger; then greed, *lobha;* then *moha,* delusion; *mada,* arrogance or pride; *mātsarya,* jealousy. These are the six enemies which are lodged in everyone of us. We have to handle them, make them friendly. They are all energies, and energies can be enemies or processed to become friends. Human animal energy needs a little purification, refinement, through self-discipline. Then something greater will come out of the individual. So, when this is achieved, *sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ,* 'that person is a *yogī* and a happy one'. How much do farmers living near rivers suffer! Water comes up to the level of the house. All agriculture is destroyed, bringing so much suffering. Then comes a government project for channelizing all this energy into agriculture and electricity. It is then that you will find the people there happy! *Sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ.* The same thing is our case also. We want to become *sukhī,* happy; we want to become *yuktaḥ,* spiritually disciplined.

By this same method only this can happen. If we become subject to these pressures, we are blown away by those currents. Where are we then? We are lost in the crowd as it were.

Human literature is full of examples of men and women who have been blown away by these inner currents, by the six enemies lurking in every human being. What you call tragedy in literature comes from this particular source. And tragedies are beautiful to see in a drama, in a theatre, but terrible to experience oneself. Never forget, tragedy is not meant to be experienced. You can enjoy it in representation. You should not make your life a tragedy. And so, there is one famous dramatist and poet who has expressed his views on this question just like the *Gītā* has done in this chapter. That is the German poet Goethe in his book, *Faust.* I have mentioned this in the earlier part of this book where this idea came. Echoes of these ideas of the *Gītā* appear in such Western literature; in Browning, Shelley, in all these British poets including Tennyson and Wordsworth, and in the European continent Goethe and some others. These ideas had started moving from East to West and this process has been intensified since then.

So, in this way, in day-to-day life, we experience these things, and every minute we are subjected to these emotional energies within us, *kāma, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, mātsarya.* We have to handle them, and we have to do it ourselves. Nobody else can do it for us. Once attained, you will be happy and fulfilled, *sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ.* Now, this is what we have to try and achieve by our efforts. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving us this insight. When we are sitting quiet, we must think of that. Here is a tremendous gush of energy coming, the energy of hatred. I must withstand it. Similarly, greed. It comes; left to itself it will go on up and up. But if you know how to check it, then you become the master of the situation. Thus you cease to be carried away by these six currents arising from within.

Even ambition, for example, can be a current; if you withstand it at a particular level, you will have achieved great things. But if you yield to that current of ambition, you lose everything. The story of Napoleon and Hitler is very important in this connection. If Napoleon had stopped Spanish wars in 1808, and had never gone to the invasion of Russia, he would have built up a stable united democratic Europe. Unlike Hitler, he had great ideas also.

But his unchecked ambition failed him, and he had to die as a prisoner of Britain in St. Helena! In Hitler's case also you can see the same thing. Unchecked ambition destroyed him after he had inflicted great harm to his own people and the Jewish community. All unchecked ambition takes away our judgement, and we get destroyed. Here you can see, the self destroying the self, one becoming one's own enemy, as this *Gītā* will tell us in the beginning of the sixth chapter.

That is why we are asked to deal courageously with these tremendous forces lodged within each of us. We have to discipline and refine them *by ourselves*. That is how we become men and women of high character. What a beautiful society will be created, when men and women will do this kind of work themselves and build up beautiful characters with love and concern for others.

Śaṅkarācārya repeats it again and again in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (verse 52):

Mastaka nyasta bhārādeḥ duḥkham anyaiḥ nivāryate;
Kṣudhādi kṛta duḥkham tu vinā svena na kenacit —

'If you are carrying a heavy burden on your head, somebody else can help you to remove it and give some relief. But, if you are hungry, nobody can relieve you by eating on your behalf. You must eat for yourself.'

Similarly he further adds in verse 54:

Vastu svarūpam sphuṭabodha cakṣuṣā
svenaiva vedyam na tu paṇḍitena;
Candra svarūpam nija cakṣuṣaiva
jñātavyam anyair avagamyate kim —

'The nature of truth must be realized by each person by one's own clear eye of knowledge, just like the rising full moon which each must see by oneself. Can somebody's description of it satisfy him or her?'

So, this kind of experience is what Vedanta stresses—experience of this higher life. It is possible for you to do so, if you know the technique of it. But experience it; don't merely talk about it; don't merely read about it. This is stressed in this *śloka* 23 of this chapter. It conveys a profound

meaning for men and women today all over the world. We are having so many young people today, without any inner discipline, but plenty of animal energy, and you can see what happens in various fields. How quickly the rowdy element in the human being comes into the picture. All football and international games are getting spoiled today by a lot of youthful rowdy energy. Think of that unfortunate event that took place in Belgium when the British football players came and did tremendous havoc. So also in Germany. In India itself, plenty of such instances are coming on. And even our politics has become a playground of rowdyism. A democracy cannot function at its best if it is based on such people. If this energy is not diverted to higher purposes, democracy will suffer terribly. It is a warning for all of us. Everywhere you will find plenty of animal energy. But the whole thing is going to waste, destroying the peace of the people. That is what is happening today in society and in politics. Such things should not happen. You must listen to the great teachers who loved humanity, who will be giving us something that we *can* practise from our own level. There is nothing impossible in what they say. And what they say is quite sound and rational, dealing with a knowledge of the human being in depth, then placing before you this picture of a peaceful life, a fulfilled life. *Sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ,* 'such a person is a *yogī* and a happy person'. That is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa puts it so beautifully. We have to withstand these currents in which thousands of lives are brought low everyday weakening many societies thereby. When you study Roman history as given by Gibbon, when the decaying process started from the second century onwards, you will find human character going down and down. The whole of the Roman system became subjected to the pressures of the external world, consumerist mania became high. The result was so much suffering for the whole population. Even Roman emperors became tools in the hands of the military soldiers. To please them, they had to pay special donations to them. Human taste became crude. Violent sports of animals killing human prisoners became attractive to Roman gentlemen and ladies. That is how the decay started in the Roman empire. Another two centuries it went on going down and down, limping as it were, and finally, the whole civilization decayed and died. The end of a civilization is marked by men and women being carried away by the strong emotional current from within, consisting of *kāma, krodha,* and the four other evils. This should be recognized and

attended to. When you attend to it, you develop a healthy civilization, a healthy stable society. Today, we have to turn back to this kind of teaching to make India a progressive democratic order. That is the challenge before us. *As I often express the idea, we have plenty of maladies, but we are fortunate, we have also remedies to remove the maladies*. Apply the remedy, the malady goes. That is the situation with respect to our and of some other countries today. The next verse, verse 24, is a very beautiful continuation of the same idea.

योऽन्तःसुखोऽन्तरारामस्तथाऽन्तर्ज्योतिरेव यः ।
स योगी ब्रह्मनिर्वाणं ब्रह्मभूतोऽधिगच्छति ॥२४॥

Yo'ntaḥ sukho'ntarārāmaḥ tathā'ntarjyotireva yaḥ;
Sa yogī brahmanirvāṇam brahmabhūto'dhigacchati —5. 24

'Whose happiness is within, whose relaxation is within, whose light is within, that *yogi* alone, becoming Brahman, gains absolute freedom in Brahman.'

That *yogi* achieves *brahma nirvāṇam,* 'complete realization of Brahman'; *brahmabhūtaḥ,* 'becoming one with Brahman'. What kind of *yogī? Yo'antaḥ sukho,* 'whose happiness is within'. He or she doesn't depend on anything external for his or her happiness. When we are children, we depend entirely upon external things for our happiness. When we become mature and more mature, that dependence becomes less and less. But in this case of the *yogī*, he or she becomes absolutely free. No dependence on any external factors. That is called freedom. Freedom means non-dependence on external factors. That is the truth of things. Says the *Manu Smṛti* (4. 160):

Sarvam paravaśam duḥkham sarvam ātmavaśam sukham;
Iti vidyāt samāsena svarūpam sukhaduḥkhayoḥ —

'Everything that makes you dependent on external factors is unhappiness; everything that makes you free from such dependence is real happiness. That is the nature of happiness and unhappiness; please understand in brief this truth.'

Any dependence on external factors is unhappiness. We want to overcome that. But mutual dependence is perfectly allowed; there is no actual dependence there. But more and more the stress should be—'I can do without it'. Such a person has found the Light of all lights within oneself, in the Atman, which is described in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (II. ii. 9) as *jyotiṣām jyotiḥ,* 'the Light of all lights.' The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (II. ii. 15) also says, *tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti,* 'by Its light alone this whole manifested universe is lighted'. That is the Atman, a bit of that Light I have seen, therefore, I have become fully satisfied. That is the language. *Brahmabhūtaḥ,* 'one who realizes Brahman' becomes Brahman according to Vedanta (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad,* III. ii. 9): *Brahmavit brahmaiva bhavati*, 'the knower of Brahman verily becomes Brahman'. Knowledge and being are the same in the inner life of man. That is not possible in our external life. When you know a table, you don't become the table; but when you know you are pure, you become pure. When you know you are illumined, you are illumined. That is your true nature. By writing a book on purity, you won't become pure; you have to realize purity in yourself. *In all inner experiences, all knowing tends to being*, but not so in the external world. Verse 25 brings another important truth:

लभन्ते ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृषयः क्षीणकल्मषाः ।
छिन्नद्वैधा यतात्मानः सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥२५॥

Labhante brahma nirvāṇam ṛṣayaḥ kṣīṇa kalmaṣāḥ;
Chinna dvaidhā yatātmānaḥ sarvabhūta hite ratāḥ —5. 25

'With imperfections exhausted, doubts dispelled, senses controlled, engaged in the good of all beings, the *ṛṣis* obtain absolute freedom in Brahman.'

Labhante brahma nirvāṇam ṛṣayaḥ, 'sages achieve *brahmanirvāṇa,* oneness with Brahman'. What kind of *ṛṣayaḥ? Kṣīṇa kalmaṣāḥ,* 'whose sins and evils have been completely eliminated'. Then only can we realize our true nature. *Chinna dvaidhā*, 'one who has transcended the notion of duality'. The notion that things are separate from each other has gone away from him or her after realizing the basic oneness of everything in Brahman. *Yatātmānaḥ,* 'the person highly disciplined within'. Then, outwardly*, sarva*

bhūta hite ratāḥ, 'interested in the happiness and welfare of all beings'. What a beautiful idea! When you achieve these things within, then your whole energy flows out in a positive form of bringing cheer and happiness to other people. How did a Mahatma Gandhi become a *Mahātmā?* All his energies flowed out to bring happiness and cheer to millions of other people. Today, in India, if we can achieve in our people even a fraction of this state, what great blessings will come! An administrator will say to oneself: 'Millions are starving; let me serve them. I am appointed by the government to look after the rural people in various forms. Let me make them happy.' For him or her to be able to say and do so, he or she must achieve a measure of this spiritual growth within themselves. If a measure of such growth comes, all our developmental plans will become successful. Without a little of that growth, all our developmental plans will become merely *garībi haṭāo* slogans, as we see everyday. All the money is wasted. No progress takes place.

So, this teaching is not merely for sages and saints. This is for everyone, so that, persons can get on to the road of their own spiritual development by taking one step, two steps, three steps, and so on, and bring happiness to millions. But some people may progress far and achieve very great heights; they are ones that are referred to here. *Labhante brahma nirvāṇam ṛṣayaḥ kṣīṇa kalmaṣāḥ; Chinnadvaidhā yatātmānaḥ sarva bhūta hite ratāḥ*. They are 'always interested to work for the welfare of all people', *sarvabhūta hiteratāḥ.* This is the state of mind that creates high character. A Gandhiji and a few others fall in this category. In small ways, there are thousands of people all over India who have this attitude. You don't see them in the open, but they are there. They are not entirely absent in our society or in any other society. But it must become an educational programme to put all our people on that road to total human development. That is real education. Swami Vivekananda calls it man-making, nation-building education and religion. What a beautiful concept of education! Through their words, we build up the life of the people. Banishing poverty, ignorance, exploitation, creating justice in society; how do you do so? From your heart comes an energy that flows in a man-ward direction, because it has already gone in a God-ward direction within. Now it gets a man-ward direction. These are the two directions of human energy. *Gītā* combines both of them. A God-ward

energy is turned into a man-ward direction. Thus one becomes a blessing to humanity. That is the language of this particular concept: *sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*. They are 'interested in working for the welfare and happiness of all people', irrespective of caste, creed, or gender. The next *śloka*, and whatever *ślokas* come later, are wonderful.

कामक्रोधवियुक्तानां यतीनां यतचेतसाम् ।
अभितो ब्रह्मनिर्वाणं वर्तते विदितात्मनाम् ॥२६॥

Kāma krodha viyuktānām yatīnām yata cetasām;
Abhito brahma nirvāṇam vartate viditātmanām — 5. 26

'Released from lust and anger, the heart well controlled, the Self realized, absolute freedom is for such spiritually disciplined people, both here and hereafter.'

Kāma krodha viyuktānām, 'those who are free form *kāma* and *krodha*'; *yatīnām,* 'to spiritually disciplined people'; *yata cetasām,* 'whose mind is fully under control'; to such people, *abhito brahmanirvāṇam vartate*, 'this unity with Brahman is an accomplished experience'. Such a person need not sit in meditation to get this kind of experience. Twenty-four hours, while dealing with human beings, dealing with administration, dealing with politics, dealing with business, he or she will be in Brahman. *Viditātmanām,* 'to one who has realized the Atman'. Therefore, their life is completely transformed *here and now*. That is the great statement here. That word *abhito* is very important. Every minute, whether you are alone, or in company, in meditation or in work, such a one is always in that atmosphere of Brahman. *Abhito brahmanirvāṇam vartate viditātmanām,* he or she has realized the infinite Atman or Brahman in you, in me, in all of us. And therefore, they are able to work for the happiness and welfare of all people. That is a great ideal of work which the *Gītā* places before us: work for the good of all, for the happiness of all. *Bhagavān* Buddha proclaimed that idea when he started his preaching: *Bahujana hitāya, bahujana sukhāya,* 'for the happiness of the many, for the welfare of the many'. That is a great emphasis in the *Gītā*. The welfare of all, not merely of one person or of a small group. *Sarva bhūta hite ratāḥ* is the language. Then, in two verses Śrī

Kṛṣṇa speaks of meditation. A little inwardness is needed to deal with all these problems of inner life.

स्पर्शान् कृत्वा बहिर्बाह्यांश्चक्षुश्चैवान्तरे भ्रुवोः ।
प्राणापानौ समौ कृत्वा नासाभ्यन्तरचारिणौ ॥२७॥

यतेन्द्रियमनोबुद्धिर्मुनिर्मोक्षपरायणः ।
विगतेच्छाभयक्रोधो यः सदा मुक्त एव सः ॥२८॥

Sparśān kṛtvā bahirbāhyān cakṣuścaivāntare bhruvoḥ;
Prāṇāpānau samo kṛtvā nāsābhyantaracāriṇau — 5. 27
Yatendriyamanobuddhiḥ muniḥ mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ;
Vigatecchābhayakrodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ — 5. 28

'Shutting out contact with external objects; steadying the eyes between the eyebrows, restricting the even currents of *Prāṇa* and *Apāna* inside the nostrils; the senses, mind, and intellect controlled; with *mokṣa* or spiritual liberation as the supreme goal; freed from sensory desire, fear, and anger: such a person is verily free forever.'

Two verses compressing the whole subject of meditation, which provides an introduction to the next chapter which is called the *Dhyāna Yoga* chapter, 'Meditation Chapter'. So, what is given in a nutshell here, becomes expanded in more detail in the next chapter. *Sparśān kṛtvā bahiḥ bāhyān,* 'shutting out all contacts with external objects'; when you sit in meditation, the sensory system is not expected to function; we take leave of them; they are of no use to you in this inner life. In the outer life, they are fully useful. So, the first thing we do is to take leave of the entire sensory system. They are of no use to me there. They can't reveal any truth of inner life. They can reveal only the changeable universe around you. *Cakṣuścaivāntare bhruvoḥ*, 'steadying the eyes between the eyebrows'. Though not very necessary, it is just mentioned here: 'the two eyeballs come close together and meet at the centre of the two nostrils'; that is an indication of a concentrated state. Generally, we close the eyes. That is the best thing, because the eye is a sense organ disturbed by visual objects which disturb meditation. That is what every psychologist will tell, that something striking the eye can disturb the mind much more than striking

the skin. Therefore, closing the eye is the early standard technique in meditation. Then, *prāṇāpānau samo kṛtvā,* 'breathing evenly *prāṇa* and *apāna* in the system'. *Nāsābhyantaracāriṇau*, 'moving within the nose'; it is the discipline of breathing to make for calmness of mind. Then, *yatendriya mano buddhiḥ,* 'the senses, the *manas* and the *buddhi* well disciplined'; *muniḥ mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ*, 'the sage, the *sādhaka,* the silent seeker, in search of spiritual liberation'; 'I don't want to remain a creature,' with that attitude the seeker is engaging oneself in this discipline of meditation. *Vigatecchābhayakrodho*, 'who has completely given up *icchā, bhaya, krodha,* desire, fear, and anger'. These three are very strong emotions. They can destroy one's life, and bring unhappiness to many others; the *Gītā* has referred to these three together. *Icchā, bhaya, krodha*. *Vigata* means without or free from. *Yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ,* 'such a person is always spiritually free'.

This is how meditation takes you into some inner development and that gives you that wonderful freedom which mere external life cannot give. This meditation, at every step, will have its happy repercussions in our external life, in our human relations, in our dealing with our human problems. The deeper we go, the better will be our external life, external work, external inter-human relation. So, this *yogī,* this *muni,* has given to oneself this discipline, and therefore 'he is ever free'. *Sadā mukta eva saḥ,* 'he or she is ever free'; that is an ideal. We are far away from it. But we can enter on that path, and go one step, two steps, three steps, as one develops one's capacity. It is difficult, but it is not impossible. The next chapter will deal more with these problems of meditation, how difficult it is and all that. Arjuna will ask on our behalf, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa will answer.

During his lecture in a town of the west coast of America, Swami Vivekananda referred to the subject of meditation in a marvellous passage (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. V, p. 253):

'Meditation is the one thing. Meditate! The greatest thing is meditation. It is the nearest approach to spiritual life—the mind meditating. It is the one moment in our daily life that we are not at all material—the Soul thinking of Itself, free from all matter—this marvellous touch of the Soul!'

We have now the last verse of the fifth chapter, verse 29, a very remarkable verse from the spiritual point of view. The verse says:

भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसां सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम् ।
सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति ॥२९॥

Bhoktāram yajñatapasām sarva loka maheśvaram;
Suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām jñātvā mām śāntimṛcchati —5. 29

'Knowing Me as the receiver and dispenser of (the fruits of) sacrifices and spiritual practices, as the great Lord of all the worlds, and as the friend of all beings, one attains Peace.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling this as the Incarnation of the Divine, about which he had said in the fourth chapter. Know Me as *bhoktāram yajña tapasām,* 'receiver and dispenser of the fruits of whatever sacrifices and spiritual austerities are done'; ultimately these reach him, the one ultimate Reality. *Sarva loka maheśvaram,* 'the Lord of all this universe', the one infinite Divine behind this universe. Similarly, a third characteristic which is the most important, *suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām*, 'the *friend* of all beings'. God is described here as the friend of all beings. No cause for fear. The god of fear vanished from Indian religion long long ago. In its place came the God of love, and therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, 'I am the friend of all.' Knowing Me as such, a person attains Peace. That is the last line.

This is a very beautiful verse centred in *Bhakti* or pure Love; *bhakti* to the personal aspect of the Impersonal-personal God of Vedanta. This *bhakti* will become the theme of the seventh and other chapters. It has just come as an introduction here. 'Know Me as the friend of all beings'. What a beautiful conception! We are limited in power, limited in our energies, but there is one unlimited Energy behind us. We can always draw upon that Energy. Just like a small bank, if too many people rush to that bank to withdraw their deposits, the bank will fail. But, if it has the Reserve Bank behind it, it has nothing to fear. Similarly, in our human life, with all our weaknesses, if we have that intense faith that there is an infinite Reality behind this universe, behind me, closest to me, and is my friend, my own

inner Self, ever ready to help me, we can get peace and freedom from tension.

In this world of tension, today, we have to, as one of the Western writers said, 'if there is no god, we have to invent one.' He is needed today. Have that tremendous faith in the Divine, but here you have not to invent. Our philosophy tells you there is a reality behind this changing universe. It is a *vastu,* a Reality. He is our own Self, the Self of all beings. That is our true nature. *Tattvamasi, tattvamasi* means that. You are That. Now, that truth is dawning on the minds of many more scientists today. Great thinkers, they feel that they cannot explain this universe without reference to an ultimate principle of consciousness. That is coming more and more into modern thought. It will lead them to what Vedanta has described as that *Saccidānanda Svarūpa paramātman,* the infinite Self, of the nature of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss, absolute. Whatever bliss we enjoy, is only a particle of the bliss of the Divine. That is infinite in dimension. And so we can participate in the life divine, and by doing so, we enrich ourselves. We become better and better.

Today, the stress is therefore on how to get qualitatively richer within. Quantity has been the whole theme of modern scientific thought and modern industrial civilization. Now there is a great need expressed by great thinkers in the West to bring in the concept of quality. What is the quality of your life? Are you peaceful? Are you happy? Can you live peacefully with others without strife, without tension? All these questions of quality are becoming more and more prominent, and it is that quality aspect that comes by believing in this divine Reality behind the universe, who is a divine Person, and because you are a person, God appears to you as a Person. And He can respond. So, in philosophy, we speak of an *ultimate* Reality. But in spiritual life, we speak of an *intimate* Reality. That is ultimate, this is intimate. *Bhakti* makes this Divine Reality intimate to us. He is one with us. He is not far away. He is here.

In the Upaniṣads, this language is used; enigmatic, paradoxical language. God is far away, God is near, nearest of the near; He is small, He is big; all this language you will find. Beyond the limitation of space, no language of big and small, distant or near, can stand with regard to that

Reality, because it is only within spatial limitation that we can use these expressions. He is beyond space and time, the Infinite, the Immortal. That is our true nature. He is the Self of our self. He is the thread that runs through all of us, like the thread that unites a garland of flowers. That language Śrī Kṛṣṇa is using in the seventh chapter, that He is the thread that unites all beings into a unity. The more you touch that thread, the more firm, the more strong, the more peaceful, you will be. *Mayi sarvam idam protam sūtre maṇigaṇā iva;* we shall study this in the coming chapters. 'All this universe is threaded in Me like so many pearls in one garland'. Pearls are different, but they become one in the garland, because of the thread. That thread of Being is the Divine in me, in all.

Based upon this, this chapter, the fifth chapter, spoke of the feeling of equality. We are all equal. Brahman is equal, we are also equal. The presence of Brahman in you and in me, in the highest and the lowest, is always a unit; there is no fraction of the unit. Therefore, equality is the great ideal of human progress and development, based upon seeing the same Divine in all its fullness in every being. We have already expressed that idea in verses 18 and 19; idea of *samam, samatva*, the feeling of equality, of sameness, we are one, we are one, we are one. The senses reveal differences, but deep down, when you begin to think and investigate, you see unity. Live in that awareness. It is that idea that Śrī Kṛṣṇa expresses here again as God who is the friend of all. He is our own inner Self, nearer to us than anything else. There is a sentence in the *Koran*, where Prophet Mohammad says, 'God is nearer to you than the veins in your neck.' So near to us is He. That is the concept of the divine in great philosophies and religions. So, in the fifth chapter, you find the whole teaching ending with this wonderful note of assurance:

Bhoktāram yajñatapasām sarvalokamaheśvaram;
Suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām jñātvā mām śāntimṛcchati —

इति संन्यास योगो नाम पञ्चमोऽध्यायः ।

Iti Sannyāsa yogo nāma pañcamo'dhyāyaḥ —

The end of the fifth chapter, designated, *The Yoga of Renunciation.*

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 6

Dhyāna-Yoga
The Yoga of Meditation

The sixth chapter, as I said, is called *Dhyāna Yoga* chapter, 'Chapter on the *Yoga* of *Dhyāna*, Meditation'. In spiritual life, we need a certain training to achieve *samatva,* the sense of equality. One such training is meditation; the other is working with people in a spirit of harmony or co-operation; the third is inner life, by which you discipline your mental energies, and make the mind realize the divine that is within, by going closer and closer to it by inward penetration. Meditation depends upon this capacity for that inward penetration being developed. And so, when we enter into the sixth chapter, we have the very opening verses dealing with spiritual life; and a few verses later, the technique of meditation is expounded in a series of beautiful verses. Here it says in the very opening verse:

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said:'

अनाश्रितः कर्मफलं कार्यं कर्म करोति यः ।
स संन्यासी च योगी च न निरग्निर्न चाक्रियः ॥१॥

Anāśritaḥ karmaphalam kāryam karma karoti yaḥ;
Sa sannyāsī ca yogī ca na niragnir-na cākriyaḥ — 6. 1

'One who performs one's bounden duty without depending upon the fruit of action—he or she is a renouncer of action as well as one of steadfast mind; not one who does not handle fire, nor one who is without action.'

In the very first *śloka* Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us about 'who is a *yogī,* who is a true *sannyāsi*, or renouncer'. He is asking that question and giving the answer: *anāśritaḥ karmaphalam kāryam karma karoti yaḥ,* 'whoever does

his or her duties, without expecting to get the fruits for oneself'—that is the attitude. The whole teaching of the *Gītā* is based upon the spirit of non-attachment—*anāsakti*—don't depend upon the fruits of the actions; it belongs to all, not only to you. So, *anāśritaḥ karmaphalam kāryam karma karoti yaḥ*, implies: you do what is to be done, in a spirit of dedication. The little 'I' is no more in the picture. The deeper 'I', which is one with all, is slowly being manifested. Therefore, we are able to renounce the fruits of actions coming to oneself—'we don't need it hereafter'. That attitude, *anāśritaḥ karmaphalam kāryam karma karoti yaḥ; sa sannyāsī ca yogī ca*, 'that person is a true *sannyāsi*, a true *yogī,* a man of true renunciation, a person of *yoga* in truth'*; na niragniḥ na cākriyaḥ*, 'and not those who undergo a *sannyāsa* ritually'. That is the meaning of *niragniḥ*, 'one who does not cook one's food in one's own fire-place'. Householders light a fire to use for worship, as well as for cooking. A *sannyāsin* doesn't cook for oneself, and so he or she is called *niragniḥ;* whatever food he or she gets by begging, he or she is satisfied with that; so, in Sanskrit we call him or her *niragniḥ*. But a mere *niragniḥ*, who doesn't touch fire or utilize the fire by himself or herself, doesn't make one a *sannyāsin;* but, that person who performs actions without attachment to the fruits is a real *sannyāsin. Na cākriyaḥ*, 'nor one who is without action'.

Why do we do anything? Because of the unfulfilled desire; therefore, we have to do. Desire impels us to do. When your desire is transcended, you have nothing to do; therefore, non-doing has become a characteristic of a highly spiritual person. But, giving up of activities is no high spirituality at all. So, that way you don't become a *yogī* or *sannyāsin. Na niragniḥ na cākriyaḥ. Kriyaḥ* means 'action'. Action is prompted by desire; first desire, then urge, and then action.

In psychology, you read that at first some desires arise in your mind. That becomes strong and becomes an urge. That impels you to action, and you receive the fruit of action, and the desire dies away. Then another desire comes up. In this way, the root of all actions is desire. This has been studied in the *Manu Smṛti* (2. 4):

Akāmasya kriyā kācit dṛśyate neha karhicit;
Yad yad hi kurute kiñcit tat tat kāmasya ceṣṭitam—

‘There is no action for one who is desireless; whatever a person does, that is a product of a prior desire.’

And non-desire is of two types. One is of the ignorant person, the lazy person, who has no particular desire; the other is of the man or woman who has gone beyond all duality and become spiritually free. These are the two types of desirelessness. In most societies, especially in India, desirelessness is not a good quality. We want a little desire in people. ‘Why should I live in dirt? Let me make life better and better.’ That desire must be there. Only with that desire will people get education, improve their surroundings. And without that desire, none of these can come. So, what we want to do is to create desire in our people for a better life, more of sanitation, more of education, more of public service activities, religious life, etc. So, desire is to be induced in them. The desirelessness which you find in most of such people is not of a high type. But when you have achieved the knowledge of Atman, the knowledge of God, then you become desireless in a higher sense. You don’t need anything; your mind doesn’t go out at all. If it goes out, it is only to bless somebody, to help somebody, and for nothing else. That idea comes in the *Gītā* in several places (5. 25; 12. 4)—*sarva bhūta hite ratāḥ,* ‘always interested to bring happiness and welfare to all people’, that is the highest form of desirelessness. We want a human being to have desires so that he or she can make his or her quality of life better and better, and not remain in what you call a dismal life. So, have some desire for betterment. Today, we have to invoke such a desire in our people. But, the same desire will cease to operate once you achieve higher and higher development in the spiritual field—so we call it *akāmaḥ,* absolutely no *kāma*. So, *akāmaḥ* exists in two dimensions. One is the ordinary dimension, full of ignorance, delusion and laziness; the other is the *sāttvika* type of *akāmaḥ,* beyond these cravings for this or that, because one has realized the Atman. What more do you need? What can compare with God? If you get God, everything else is secondary and has absolutely no value. In many of the statements of the mystics all over the world— Christian, Sufi, Buddhist and others—you’ll find the idea, ‘I have got the most precious thing in the world, the Divine itself. I don’t depend upon anything else.’ Such a state is a state of desirelessness, and yet whatever desire is there in such persons is

only to serve people, to make their life better and better. All great people belong to this category.

This idea is carried further in the next verse, a very important verse:

यं संन्यासमिति प्राहुर्योगं तं विद्धि पाण्डव ।
न ह्यसंन्यस्तसङ्कल्पो योगी भवति कश्चन ॥२॥

Yam sannyāsamiti prāhuḥ yogam tam viddhi pāṇḍava;
Na hyasannyasta saṅkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana — 6. 2

'Know that to be devotion to *yoga* of action which is called renunciation, O Pāṇḍava; for none becomes a *yogī* of action without renouncing *saṅkalpa*.'

'That thing what is called *sannyāsa*, the same thing is *yoga.*' *Yam sannyāsam iti prāhuḥ yogam tam viddhi pāṇḍava.* Not the mere giving up of this or that is *sannyāsa*. True *sannyāsa* and true *yoga* are one and the same thing. *Hi asannyasta saṅkalpo*, 'if you don't give up your *saṅkalpa*'; *na yogī bhavati kaścana,* 'you cannot become a *yogī*', or a *sannyāsi*. *Saṅkalpa* means the outgoing desire, 'I must have this, I must have that', endlessly going on, what I referred to earlier as the 'consumerist mania' of modern civilization. The mind is constantly formulating, 'I want this, I want that', that is called *saṅkalpa*. *Saṅkalpa* is the root of all desires. All desires come from *saṅkalpa*. In the *Mahābhārata* (Critical Edition: *Śāntiparva,* 171. 25) there is a wonderful story, towards the end of which, the man, who is the central figure of that story, says:

Kāma jānāmi te mūlam saṅkalpāt kila jāyase;
Na tvām saṅkalpayiṣyāmi samūlo na bhaviṣyasi—

'O, now I have understood. O desire, you are born of *saṅkalpa*. I shall not have *saṅkalpa*; then you'll not come and trouble me at all.'

So, *saṅkalpa* leads to desire, desire leads to various types of activity, including the delusive life we live very often in society which has been well portrayed by the German poet and dramatist Goethe in his book, *The Faust:*

'from desire I stumble to possession,
and in possession languish from desire.'

That is a wonderful passage in that famous drama.

So, whenever we are full of these *saṅkalpas*, we can't control them, we can't regulate them, we become slaves to them and they pull us this way and that way. And when you get something, you want something more; when you are not granted more, then you become unhappy. In this way, a human being is never fulfilled by running after things or expressing *saṅkalpa* through desires and desire-prompted activities. The only way is to divert some energy to something higher. That higher dimension is the spiritual development of the human being about which many Western scientists today are writing books. Number of books are coming out with the spiritual orientation of human life and human civilization.

And so, *na hyasannyasta saṅkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana*, 'you cannot become a *yogī* without giving up *saṅkalpa*'. That *sannyāsa* behind a *yogī,* is what makes him or her a *yogī. Saṅkalpa* is the thing which has to be controlled and disciplined. For example, how to stop this consumerist civilization from going in a wrong way. This consumerist mania must be controlled. This can be done by making a distinction between wants and needs: needs you fulfil, but check the wants; wants are endless. That is one great lesson we must learn; needs do not do any harm. We have forgotten the distinction between needs and wants. Everything is 'wants' now. All the 'wants' also become duly 'needs'. Therefore, the trouble has set in. I have earlier referred to wisdom that came to Yayāti, a great king in India who lived in the mythological ages, about five thousand years ago. He enjoyed a long life full of desires and their satisfactions, and, when he began to think about it, he found out this truth (*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* IX. 19.14):

Na jātu kāmaḥ kāmānām upabhogena śāmyati;
Haviṣā kṛṣṇa vartmeva bhūya eva abhivardhate —

'Desire is not quenched by satisfying the desire; it only gets inflamed like fire into which butter is poured (to put it out).' That is the language he has used there.

Just after the Second World War, as I have referred to earlier, a Hoover Committee commission was appointed to study the 'recent' economic

trends in the United States. In the report of that Commission occurs this sentence:

'This inquiry has revealed that human desires are endless, that there are no new desires that will not make way for newer desires as soon as they are satisfied.'

Therefore, these endless desires go on and on, and, running behind them our lives become flimsy. It is just like the analogy found in our literature, of the donkey who makes the wheel in the oil mill go round and round. A little piece of carrot is held before it, and finding the carrot within its reach, the donkey tries to get it. That makes the donkey move, and the mill owner gets his work done through the donkey. But the donkey gets nothing! This human life is sometimes just like that. Running after this, running after that, and every day one becomes less and less as a human being. That is the result of consumerist mania. How to check it, how to divert it to higher levels? That question is central to all the discussions going on about human problems in modern civilization.

Vedanta discussed this subject ages ago and gave us some wisdom. It never said, 'don't enjoy'; it never said, 'don't satisfy your needs'; it said that, beyond a certain level, you should put a check on it, apply the brake. *Nivṛtti* is the word used for this; the other, running after things, is called *pravṛtti*. Putting a check on this craze of endless *pravṛtti* is called *niviṛtti*, 'withdrawal'—'I don't need it, I can do without it'. Only thinking people can take this stand, as they get a glimpse of transcendental spiritual life. But our thinking apparatus is very much affected today by television advertisements. As soon as you see an advertisement, you begin to feel you want this, you want that. Wants are *created* in you. Today, there is a protest in America by several writers against this work of the advertisers for getting people to purchase their goods, psychologically forcing them to purchase, as it were. And the advertisements being very costly, the price of that commodity is increased to pay for that advertisement! And you and I have to pay for it. We don't ordinarily know all these things. Slowly, you get to know that this is the situation: the more complicated the civilization, the less freedom men and women have to choose the things that one likes or needs. These are chosen for you by the advertisers concerned! So, these are

the problems which we encounter in a consumerist society. What is the way out then?

We need a philosophy which sees men and women, not only as seekers of the sensory goods and satisfactions, but as seekers of higher values: music, art, ethical and moral values, spirituality; all these are part and parcel of human inheritance. We have the possibility within us to achieve all of them. Don't neglect them. Only concentrating on one level, the organic level, the sensory level, won't do. Never do that; you will suffer for it. That teaching has to come from the great philosophies and religions of the world. Vedanta prevails upon more and more people in this modern scientific age to take to this thinking.

Then we have a beautiful expression in the next verse:

आरुरुक्षोर्मुनेर्योगं कर्म कारणमुच्यते ।
योगारूढस्य तस्यैव शमः कारणमुच्यते ॥३॥

Árurukṣoḥ muneḥ yogam karma kāraṇam ucyate;
Yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate — 6. 3

'For the person of meditation wishing to attain purification of heart leading to concentration, action is said to be the way. For such a person, when he or she has attained such (concentration), inaction is said to be the way.'

Árurukṣoḥ muneḥ yogam, 'one who is striving to be a *yogī*'; he or she is striving; *ārurukṣoḥ* means 'desirous of climbing to'. *Karma kāraṇam ucyate*, 'action is said to be the means' to help him or her to climb to the high state of *yoga. Karma* or action has got a great role there: without doing something you can't climb to that state of *yoga*. But, *yoga ārūḍhasya tasyaiva,* 'for one who has achieved that *yoga*'; *yoga ārūḍha* means 'one who has already risen to the level of *yoga*'. Then what is that such a person will do? *Śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate*, for him or her, 'inaction is the means'. He or she becomes perfectly inactive. All the commotion occurring within have vanished and absolute peace comes to the heart.

So, these are the two stages. At the time you are striving to be a *yogī*, you have to work hard. Once you become a *yogī,* all work ceases for you;

you don't need anything; your mind doesn't go out at all—'I don't need, I don't need', that conviction comes to you because you have achieved something priceless in yourself.

Our philosophers never tell you to be dried-up ascetics. You give up something because you've got something better, something higher, something more valuable. And the highest value is spiritual realization. Complete fulfilment comes thereby and this fulfilment is the goal of human evolution, says 20th century biology—not organic satisfaction, not numerical increase, not physical survival—these are not the goal of human evolution. They were human goals according to 19th century biology, but in this century, due to great developments in science, men like Sir Julian Huxley presented this idea—the goal of human evolution is fulfilment. Are you fulfilled? If that is so, 'quality becomes enthroned over quantity', says Julian Huxley. Now, quality of your life and not quantity becomes a great criterion of evolution. Can you live at peace with yourself, with your husband, with your wife, with your friends? What a beautiful conception of quality! That is the goal of human evolution; through that only you become fulfilled. That fulfilment is considered the goal of evolution today. That is why Julian Huxley wanted physical sciences to develop into a higher science to deal with the subject of fulfilment, and he calls it *a science of human possibilities*. That is the exact status of India's ancient Vedanta—a science of human possibilities. All these possibilities are there in *every* human being; he or she can rise above tensions and become perfectly calm and steady. That possibility is there in you and me, says Vedanta.

The word *śamaḥ* means 'cessation of effort'—the heart is absolutely calm and quiet. When water in the lake is perfectly calm, without a single bubble or wave, that state is called *śama*. The mind is in that state of *śama*. That comes only when the sense of fulfilment comes to you. When you are truly fulfilled, you have that *śama* attitude. When you are hungry, you are full of tension within. Hunger makes you tense: 'I must eat, I must eat'; desire comes, activity comes. You cook, then you eat, then fulfilment comes. If thereafter somebody brings food, you say, 'No, I don't care, I'm full now, I'm absolutely fulfilled'. That is our daily experience, but it is only temporary. Philosophy and spirituality tell you that there is also a state of complete fulfilment when the mind will not run after anything else

afterwards; that state is the realization of the Divine. That is the state of *yoga; yogārūḍha,* 'one who is well established in that state of *yoga*'. In a personality like Śrī Ramaṇa Maharṣi, for example, there is nothing to take him out of himself, except compassion; that compassion is always there. In a Buddha and a Jesus there was this tremendous compassion. With that compassion they spoke words which did so much good to people. Such persons are absolutely free, fulfilled persons: *kṛtārtha*, *kṛtakṛtya*, these are the words for fulfilment in Sanskrit.

So, this is the idea of *yogārūḍha,* 'rising to and being established in *yoga*'. The next *śloka,* verse 4, explains the nature of a *yogārūḍha*:

यदा हि नेन्द्रियार्थेषु न कर्मस्वनुषज्जते ।
सर्वसंकल्पसंन्यासी योगारूढस्तदोच्यते ॥४॥

Yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu na karmasvanuṣajjate;
Sarva saṅkalpa sannyāsī yogārūḍhaḥ tadocyate — 6. 4

'Verily, when there is no attachment either to sense-objects or to actions, having renounced all *saṅkalpas*, then is one said to have risen to *yoga* state.'

A person is said to be a *yogārūḍhaḥ* when *na anuṣajjate*, 'he or she has not any interest'; *indriyārtheṣu,* 'in sensory objects'; *karmasu*, 'nor in actions' performed to appropriate those objects. Then *sarvasaṅkalpa sannyāsī*, 'a *sannyāsi* who has renounced all *saṅkalpas*'. Such a person is a *yogārūḍhaḥ*, 'one who has established himself or herself in the state of *yoga*'. This is a human possibility. You may not achieve it fully in one life, but it is good to go towards that even a little for getting at least a little joy out of this life, some real peace in this life of tension and struggle.

In the next two verses, verse 5 and verse 6, a great message comes from Śrī Kṛṣṇa to all people. These two verses are set in a beautiful language, and the sentiments expressed in these verses are sentiments which every father and mother can convey to their children. This is very important as you will see. Verse 5 says:

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।
आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥५॥

Uddharet ātmanātmānam nātmānam avasādayet;
Átmaiva hy-ātmano bandhur-ātmaiva ripur-ātmanaḥ—6. 5

‘ Raise yourself by yourself; don’t let yourself down, for you alone are your own friend, you alone are your own enemy.’

That is a wonderful utterance here. We always have the tendency to put our troubles as coming from somebody else. And today, especially in modern civilization, this is a constant attitude of mind. Why am I like this? My father or mother was bad, or the society is bad, or God is bad. You put every blame on others, and assert inwardly that ‘I am myself not responsible for anything.’ As regards civilization, even children say today that, if anything is wrong with them, their parents are responsible. ‘I have no responsibility, therefore, I can escape all blame.’ As against it, it is good to have this new idea: *uddharet ātmanātmānam*, ‘raise oneself by oneself’. Suppose you received some bad treatment when you were young. Well, you can overcome the bad effects. Have that positive attitude: ‘raise oneself by oneself’, and do not allow yourself to be jostled by others all the time. ‘I had this misfortune; I have experienced it; now I have to overcome it. That strength is in me.’ With that faith in oneself, those unhealthy ideas go away. Throwing the blame on everybody else! Why did you fail in the examination? Teachers did not teach! It is true these days in India, every teacher does not teach well; or the question paper was very heavy, and the questions were not covered by adequate teaching. All these answers are given, but there is also another answer, ‘I did not study well.’ That answer nobody gives. It is good for people to give that answer. ‘I did not study well. I take the blame on myself. I shall correct myself.’ That gives you strength; that gives you a sense of personal worth.

So, *na ātmānam avasādayet*, ‘don’t pull oneself down’. Why*? Átmā eva hi ātmano bandhuḥ*, ‘oneself is one’s own friend’, and, *ātmā eva ripuḥ ātmanaḥ,* ‘oneself is also one’s own enemy’. What a wonderful expression! *Átmā eva hi ātmano bandhuḥ ātmā eva ripuḥ ātmanaḥ*. Verily true, ‘I am my own friend, I am my own enemy.’ Even if somebody troubles me, if I

don’t lodge it into my mind, it will not trouble me at all. If I take it, it will trouble me. So, my taking it, my accepting it, is responsible for this trouble. Don’t take it. Try to keep it away from yourself. That strength we don’t have. So, we are influenced by everything else. Hence, it is good to develop that inner strength. It is just like what we say in the medical language: you may have a number of microbes around you which can cause disease in you, but if you are strong in physique, no disease will come to you, no microbe can do any harm to you. So, strengthen yourself. That is Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s teaching.

When India was striving for political freedom, the first group of political leaders said, ‘Please give us freedom as a gift.’ Then came the real movement from Lokmanya Tilak of the Indian National Congress, who uttered that famous *mantra* ‘Swaraj is my birthright. I shall have it.’ It was that, when followed, which brought ultimately freedom to our country. Depend upon yourself, don’t depend upon others. You are making yourself small by depending on others. Make yourself big in your own way. That is why it finally ended in Gandhiji’s ‘Quit India Movement’ in 1942, and within five years the country became free.

So too, in personal life it is the same story. But then, we begin to question this idea: I can be my own friend, but how can *I* be my own enemy? My enemy must be somebody else! That is answered in the next verse.

बन्धुरात्मात्मनस्तस्य येनात्मैवात्मना जितः ।
अनात्मनस्तु शत्रुत्वे वर्तेतात्मैव शत्रुवत् ॥६॥

Bandhuḥ ātmātmanaḥ tasya yena ātmā eva ātmanā jitaḥ;
Anātmanaḥ tu śatrutve varteta ātmā eva śatruvat — 6. 6

‘One becomes one’s own friend when one has conquered oneself; but to the unconquered self, he or she is inimical, (and becomes) like (an external) enemy.’

These are all profound psychological insights embedded in these verses. When you discipline this sensory system, this psychic system, you develop great character-strength; then you become your own friend. But, the other

way, *anātmanastu śatrutve*, ‘when you leave the mind and the sensory energies to themselves, and you don’t discipline them, you don’t train them, then you become your own enemy’. This is the teaching.

How much it means to all of us in the development of character! Always complaining against others is not good. In fact, the complaining attitude is a very poor attitude for a human being, and many people have this complaining attitude: always complaining against this, against that, against that person or this situation, etc. And then comes resentment: resenting like this, ‘O, this has been done.’ I carry in my heart one resentment, a second resentment, and so on. I once read a sentence in an American journal, years ago; it said, ‘blessed is the heart that doesn’t collect resentments.’ You go on collecting resentments from morning till evening. By the time you are forty or fifty, your heart is full of complaints, full of resentments. What has happened to you? You have become your own ‘Enemy Number One’. Why did you collect those resentments and keep them within you? You could have just analysed them and thrown them away. So, who is your enemy? You yourself. Somebody abuses me and goes away. I take it in, I culture it in my system, and it makes me weak, it makes me depressed. That man is dead and gone; but, I am still cherishing the words he has thrown at me, because I took it in. Who is your enemy? You yourself. Because you didn’t have any control over your mind, over your inner life.

You see children, for example. One child abuses another child. That child leaves and goes to its mother to complain. And we are like such children, constantly complaining about this, about that. Maturity has not come to us. Śrī Kṛṣṇa wants men and women to be psychically mature, that is, ‘*I* have to take the responsibility on myself; it is *my* responsibility.’ When you do something wrong, for example, some punishment is given. ‘Yes, I have done wrong, I take the punishment, there is nothing wrong in imparting that punishment to me.’ That punishment may bring a trauma in the human mind is a modern fiction. From Freud onwards, such thinking has come. Any kind of punishment, even a scolding, can create trauma in the weak human mind; therefore, don’t punish, don’t scold. That is what has made the human mind very weak today. There is no need for it. ‘Well, I have done wrong. I will pay for it. It is okay. The matter is over.’ That is

how inner strength comes from discipline. Such people alone can develop high character.

So, these two verses are important: *uddharet ātmanā ātmānam*—'raise yourself by yourself', because you are your own friend, you are your own enemy. How? When you discipline your own psychic and sensory energies within you, you become your own friend. If you don't do so, you become your own enemy.

If children bite their tongue, it pains them and they complain against their mother for it. If you have bitten your own tongue, lay the blame on yourself, don't lay it on somebody else. In this way, you have to build up your inner strength. The more you build up the inner strength, the less you will complain against others; the more you put blame on others, you become weaker and weaker. A little strength must come to the nation, to the people, by having faith in oneself. 'Yes, I have done it. I shall not do it again.' That's called manliness, a strong attitude. 'If I have done wrong, I have to pay for it by being punished; I am glad to pay the penalty.' It is not a mere theory; it can be implemented in life.

Anātmanaḥ tu śatrutve varteta ātmaiva śatruvat, 'don't become your own enemy by not handling this psychic energy packet that you have got'. Handle it, refine it, purify it, discipline it; then your whole system becomes your friend. Nothing can do harm to you.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is introducing in these two verses this beautiful technique, 'raise yourself by yourself, don't let yourself down, for you are your own friend, you are your own enemy.' Those who can discipline their inner energies, they become their own friends. Those who do not do so, they become, as it were, their own enemy. So, don't be an enemy to yourself. That is the instruction Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives to all of us. This is how we build up our inner strength. And I personally feel that every child must be told, 'you are your own friend, you are your own enemy'. That will give them more and more inner strength. At present it is not there. Always the accusing finger points to somebody else. 'That person troubles me. This person or this child troubles me.' That must change, so that children develop their inner strength. If it is a very dangerous situation, if external things are very bad, you have to fight them, but for dealing with minor human interactions,

in which you are often getting into trouble, you must find strength from within to withstand things yourself, and not become a *mimosa pudica* plant that breaks down at the slightest touch from outside. That should not be. *Mimosa pudica* is that plant which becomes half-dead if you blow at it; then again it comes back to life. It is a wonderfully sensitive plant. So, human beings should not be *mimosa pudica*. They must have some strength to stand the pressure that comes from outside. A child brought up at home, in familiar surroundings, when it goes to school or college, it sees a different world. So many pressures come upon the child. It must be able to withstand them and develop new strength. That is why we send children to school; they will be good-for-nothing if they stay only with intimate people at home. The wider world is there; they have to make their way in that situation also. What an amount of inner strength we need to stand the pressures that act on us in modern societies. The only solution is to strengthen yourself. Before you send the child out into the world, strengthen it, and that strength is, essentially, spiritual strength, not mere physical strength, not mere intellectual strength, but real spiritual strength. Children need some spiritual strength to understand the pressures of modern civilization. Without it, they can be simply consumed by civilization.

So, the *Bhagavad Gītā* tells every parent to give this teaching to one's children, boy or girl; before you go into the world, strengthen yourself. There are so many currents and cross-currents in this world. Children and youth will be washed away in that current. We don't want them to be washed away. We can enjoy the river if we know how to swim. If we are washed away by the river there is no fun in getting into the river. Modern society is like this. So, this teaching must be given to all children today, because the situation is getting more and more difficult day by day. In olden days, except on certain days, there was no such current outside. Today there is plenty of it. In five days a child can be completely ruined by the society outside. What is the remedy? The remedy is only here—*uddharet ātmanā ātmānam*, telling the child, 'stand on your own feet', develop strength, then you won't be carried away by whatever you experience. Develop a little spirit of discrimination. Through this inner discipline you develop tremendous strength in yourself, and that strength, as I said earlier, is not mere physical strength or even intellectual strength. A first class student can

get into trouble much more quickly than a second class student. Intellectual strength is of no use here. Some awareness of the Divine spark that is within you can alone save you. Tell children of that awareness, that behind the body-mind complex there is a spark of the Divine. That is a source of infinite strength. 'Let me take recourse to a bit of that strength; then I can withstand the pressures outside.' If this kind of training is given to children, they will be able to withstand modern society's pressures; otherwise, forty to fifty per cent of children will be physically affected in the current of modern life.

So, this teaching of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is supremely significant for all children in today's society. It is useful for all times, but especially now, when there are so many troubles coming from outside, which can shake the mind of even the strongest people. That is the world we are living in. So, spiritual strength is the real strength. Any child who has got spiritual strength can face stress and strain; it can stand a little scolding or even a little caning, and it will not cause any trauma in the child. But, today, very few children have the power to withstand all this; they quickly develop trauma, various complexes in the mind, and they become apathetic, forget their duties and responsibilities, and sit quiet. All these difficulties will come. Society is like that today. And so, people should understand this truth of the ever-present spiritual strength in every human being, which is given to us in the Vedantic literature.

As I said earlier, there are three sources of strength in every human being. The first is muscular strength, *bāhu balam*, that is the most ordinary and the most palpable form of strength. The second is *buddhi balam*, intellectual strength. But, these two are very ordinary. The second is better than the first, but even the second is useless in the world in which we live. And so, there is a third source of strength in everyone, says Vedanta. That is called *ātma balam*, or *yoga balam*, strength coming from one's spiritual development, strength that comes only from the Atman; that is supreme strength. So, *bāhu balam*, *buddhi balam* and *ātma balam*. We do need to develop all these three *balams* in our children. Let them do exercise; let them play games; let the body be developed. Similarly, let them study books, think and develop their minds and intellect, be creative; that is very necessary. But, let them not stop at that. Let them try to get a little spiritual

strength from within themselves. With a little bit of *ātma balam,* they can withstand the pressures from outside more and more.

These are the wonderful ideas that come out of the sixth chapter of the *Gītā;* these words, I personally feel, children must hear. Let them be given this thought at the age of six or seven; then onwards it must be given prominence. By the time they are twelve, they will be able to understand a little bit. 'Yes, I can depend upon my inner strength; I can develop some inner strength', that kind of thinking must come. By the time they are fully mature, twenty or twenty-one, it becomes a wonderful possession. This is what the world needs today. These two verses have a special significance, therefore, for humanity in today's civilization.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa now begins to expound the main subject of this chapter, namely, meditation. Preliminary ideas were given till now. We now come to the actual technique of meditation from the next verse onwards. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here in verse 7:

जितात्मनः प्रशान्तस्य परमात्मा समाहितः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु तथा मानापमानयोः ॥७॥

Jitātmanaḥ praśāntasya paramātmā samāhitaḥ;
Śītoṣṇa sukhaduḥkheṣu tathā mānāpamānayoḥ — 6. 7

'To the self-controlled and serene person, the Supreme Self is the object of constant realization, in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, as well as in honour and dishonour.'

Jitātmanaḥ, 'whoever has conquered one's own inner energies'; *ātman* sometimes means 'the body', sometimes 'sense organs' or 'the mind', and sometimes, used in its own sense, namely, 'the infinite Self'. So, the body also is *ātman*. So far as the chair is concerned, the body is the *ātman* which sits on the chair which is the *anātman,* not-self or object. So, from the body onwards, Vedanta uses the word Atman, to denote various constituents of personality, which are subjects in one context and objects in another context. But really, the pure Self is the real Atman, the Self within the self, the immortal Divine Self, the One in all, always the subject and never the object. So, in order to characterize It, there is another word *Paramātman,*

the Supreme Self. The word Atman is enough, but sometimes *Paramātman*, the Supreme Self, is used. From various levels we understand the truth and so from a lower level if you understand the Atman, then the real Atman will be *Paramātman*, the Supreme Self, the Divine itself.

So, *jitātmanaḥ*, 'he who has conquered the Atman'. What is this Atman? The body, the sensory system, the *manas*—these constitute the Atman in this context; *jitātmanaḥ*, 'of one who conquers oneself by disciplining oneself'. *Praśāntasya*, 'of the tranquil person'; out of that disciplining will come real tranquillity, real peace. Peacelessness of the self is at the sensory level, at the mental level. Above that everything is full of peace. So, we have to concentrate at this level to discipline these energies; then you will become tranquil. *Paramātmā samāhitaḥ*, 'such a one becomes fully established and concentrated in the *Paramātman,* the Supreme Self'. By this method only we can achieve the Supreme Self. When there is a chaotic inner life, we can't have the experience of the Atman. This is a very beautiful idea!

So, *śītoṣṇa sukha duḥkheṣu tathā māna apamānayoḥ*, the mind remains steady all the time, even amidst the various changing aspects of our daily life, like 'cold, heat, happiness and sorrow, and honour and dishonour'. The external events are impinging upon us all the time; but the inner mind remains serene. That is the meaning of the word *praśāntasya.* When you are *praśāntaḥ,* you don't mind whether you are honoured or dishonoured, whether it is cold or hot, whether it is happiness or sorrow. That is the fruit of *yoga. Yoga* alone gives a man or women freedom. We are not free now. We are subject to nature's pressure, but when you take to *yoga,* you slowly experience, 'yes, I am free, I am free. I will not be at the dictate of the external forces.' This is a profound truth, which, in the modern age, is very much needed. We are so much controlled, directed, conditioned by the external forces. We have lost our own inner integrity of the Self. Therefore, *yoga* is very important for every human being. And fortunately, today, people all over the world are pursuing this subject increasingly.

Then, the next *śloka,* verse 8, says:

ज्ञानविज्ञानतृप्तात्मा कूटस्थो विजितेन्द्रियः ।
युक्त इत्युच्यते योगी समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः ॥८॥

Jñāna vijñāna tṛptātmā kūṭastho vijitendriyaḥ;
Yukta ityucyate yogī samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ — 6. 8

'Whose heart is filled with satisfaction through knowledge and wisdom, and is steady, whose senses are conquered, and to whom a lump of earth, stone, and gold are the same, that *yogī* is called steadfast.'

At this stage of life, when external things do not attract you, do not enslave you, you become free, you become steady within. Such a person is described here, 'he or she is truly a *yogī*'; *yuktaḥ*, means 'well established in *yoga*'. How? *Jñāna vijñāna tṛpta ātmā*, 'satisfied with *jñāna* and *vijñāna*'. *Jñāna* here means merely the understanding of the pros and cons of things, the technical know-how of things. We study all about *yoga,* all about *brahmajñāna;* that is called *jñāna*. But, when you experience the truth contained in the study, that is called *vijñāna*, 'wisdom: the experience of it'. It is not enough that you know the theory. You must experience it. In spiritual life, that is the most important thing. The amount of technical knowledge, theoretical knowledge, is of no use at all. But an ounce of practice is far superior to tons of study and theory. Therefore, *jñāna vijñāna tṛpta ātmā*, 'who is satisfied with *jñāna* and *vijñāna*'; *kūṭasthaḥ*, 'who becomes steady', absolutely steady. As our teachers often express it, be like an anvil in the blacksmith's shop. How many unnumbered pieces are hammered and shaped, and sent out, but the anvil remains absolutely steady. This is the example given. So, *vijitendriyaḥ*, 'he or she who has conquered all the senses'. The senses can't do what they like; without *my* permission no sense organ will function. I am the master here; that situation is mentioned here. Nature also intended that the sense organs must be mastered by the man or woman concerned.

Otherwise, the cerebral system becomes a slave to the sensory system. That is very unfortunate, and today, that is the condition of most human beings. Their entire thinking power is controlled and directed by their sensory appetites; the senses are the master. The human being is only a servant. The situation is just like tail wagging the dog. And most people are

in that condition. The sensory system controls and directs the cerebral system; it has no independence at all. But, according to neurology, the cerebral system is meant to make us independent of the sensory system, to take us to higher levels of life's development.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here, *vijitendriyaḥ*, 'such a person who has controlled the senses'; *yukta ityucyate*, 'is called a *yukta*, well-established in *yoga*', that is, a *yogī*. And his or her mind has a wonderful quality. His or her evaluation of things will be different from that of others who have not controlled their senses. We ordinarily evaluate the world on the basis of sensory attraction, sensory nourishment, etc. But a *yogī* has no sensory attraction, so he or she does not evaluate the world in that way. That is why it is said here, *sama loṣṭāśma kāñcanaḥ*; *loṣṭa* means 'mud'; *āśma* means 'a piece of stone'; and *kāñcana* means 'gold'; *sama,* means 'equal'; these three are just the same to him. That is the attitude. These are meant only for sensory satisfaction, and they have no value beyond the sensory level of the human life.

Therefore, at this stage, one develops that wonderful quality of *samatva,* 'even-mindedness'. Sri Ramakrishna practised it saying, '*ṭākā māṭi, māṭi ṭākā*', and throwing them both into the river Ganges. *Ôākā* means 'rupee', *māṭi* means 'mud'; *ṭākā māṭi, māṭi ṭākā* means 'rupee is mud, mud is rupee'. Its value is only for physical satisfaction. Money has no other value. Peace of mind, moral elevation, spiritual development, none of these can come through money. Only eating, drinking and pleasure; nothing else money can give. And so, this idea, *sama loṣṭāśma kāñcanaḥ,* comes again and again.

As soon as you step on the road of *yoga*, you develop this capacity to discriminate. These are ordinary things; you become indifferent to them; you don't need them much, just enough for the maintenance of life, a decent human life. That is the attitude that you develop once you go beyond the sensory level of life. That is called *yoga*. Going beyond the sensory level of life is called *yoga,* which also then helps to steady that sensory level of life. These are all natural to the practitioner of *yoga*. It is *not an external pressure* that forces a person to give up this or that. No sense of loss, even no sense of sacrifice is there. The whole thing is very natural. 'I am in

search of something profound, something deep. Compared to it, these are very ordinary'—that attitude comes to such a *yogī*. When we achieve God, how can these little things attract a person? These are nothing, just a dust particle—that is the language used. This is the experience of such men and women; *bahavo,* 'many people', have experienced it.

You have to remember this: if there is evil in society today, it is entirely due to this over-evaluation of these ordinary sensory things. Thereby, all higher things have been completely eliminated or devalued. As the great devotee Hanumān said, 'I have got the great gem of Rāma in my heart, what do I care for these things?' That's what the *bhaktas* or devotees of God hold; that is not a mere theory; it is an experience. There is no struggle, there is no sense of privation; everything is done naturally.

Then comes another quality of such a person:

सुहृन्मित्रार्युदासीनमध्यस्थद्वेष्यबन्धुषु ।
साधुष्वपि च पापेषु समबुद्धिर्विशिष्यते ॥९॥

Suhṛnmitrāryudāsīna madhyastha dveṣyabandhuṣu;
Sādhuṣvapi ca pāpeṣu samabuddhirviśiṣyate — 6. 9

'One who looks with equal regard upon well-wishers, friends, enemy, neutrals, arbiters, the hateful, the relatives, and upon the righteous and the unrighteous alike, attains excellence.'

That *sama buddhiḥ*, that 'equanimous vision', is highly praised in the *Gītā*. In the fifth chapter also (verse 18) we had reference to that *samadarśin*, 'person equal-minded in all situations'. *Suhṛt*, 'a friend'—one who is *always a well-wisher* is called a *suhṛt* in Sanskrit; and *mitra* means *merely* 'a friend'; *ari,* 'enemy'; *udāsīna*, 'an indifferent person'; *madhyasthaḥ*, 'one who is equal to both the sides in a dispute', something like an arbitrator; *dveṣyaḥ*, 'one who hates you'; *bandhu*, one's own 'relation'; *sādhu*, 'good people'; *pāpeṣu*, 'with sinful people'; *samabuddhiḥ*, 'one whose mind is equal in reaction'; *viśiṣyate*, 'that is the most excellent attitude to have'. This can come only by a little advance in the path of *yoga*, in the path of spiritual awareness. If somebody scolds you, or abuses you, it won't give you any kind of trauma if you are advanced in

spiritual life. It will be just like a small flea bite. That strength comes from within, because you are in touch with something greater within you—the infinite Self. 'These events are not going to disturb me at all; my peace of mind will be unruffled.' But when I am intensely worldly, any one of these can upset my peace of mind. Once you step into spiritual life, these external pressures lose their pressure on you. They become powerless to disturb you. This can be experienced by everyone. How to reduce the impact of these external events on your mind? Not by physical power; that cannot sustain you for long. But, if your mind is riveted to something higher, these external impacts are as nothing. They are very ordinary to me. 'Let him speak, it doesn't matter'—that attitude you cannot have without taking the first step in *yoga*. Afterwards everything becomes steady.

This *sama buddhi* is highly praised in the *Gītā* where this idea finds mention in many places: in chapter 2, verse 15 as *sama duḥkha sukham;* in chapter 2, verse 48, as *samatvam;* in chapter 5, verse 18, as *samadarśin;* in chapter 12, verse 13, and in chapter 14, verse 24, as *samaduḥkhasukhaḥ;* in chapter 12, verse 4, as *sama buddhayaḥ;* and in chapter 13, verse 28, as *samavasthitam.*

Then, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

योगी युञ्जीत सततमात्मानं रहसि स्थितः ।
एकाकी यतचित्तात्मा निराशीरपरिग्रहः ॥१०॥

Yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānam rahasi sthitaḥ;
Ekākī yatacittātmā nirāśīḥ aparigrahaḥ — 6. 10

'The *yogī* should constantly practise concentration of the mind, retiring into solitude, alone, with the mind and body subdued, and free from (all anxiety of) hope and possession.'

Having elaborated all the great achievements of *yoga*, the qualities that come out of the achievements, and the much-needed character-strength one gets thereby, Śrī Kṛṣṇa now introduces the technique of the specialized *yoga* practice—different from the *yoga* teachings of the previous chapters.

In verse 10 Śrī Kṛṣṇa advises such people: *yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānam*, 'the *yogī* has to practise concentration of the mind constantly'.

How to deal with this mind, how to shape it, how to make it pure, how to make it concentrated? One has to practise it 'constantly'.

How? *Rahasi sthitaḥ,* 'settled in a secluded place' in this specialized *yoga;* the mind can be handled nicely only in a quiet and secluded place, not in a place which is constantly disturbed by external forces. Not only so, *ekākī,* 'alone', not in a crowd. Once you try to go beyond the sensory level, there is no need of people at all. Even if somebody is sitting next to you, you are not in touch with the person. You are in a different world entirely; the other person is also in a different world. So, you become *ekākī* automatically when you sit in meditation. You might be in a crowd, but you are alone. This *aloneness* is a great quality of meditation. Husband, wife, children—all sitting together, but once you start your meditation, there is neither husband nor wife nor children. You are in a world of your own. That is aloneness, a wonderful experience. How to *enjoy* that aloneness? We shall realize then that we are not truly alone; through *yoga* we shall come in touch with the profound Divine being, hidden in our own heart. But this takes a long time and steady practice; and that technique is being expounded here.

Sri Ramakrishna used to sing:

Jatane hṛdaye rekho ādariṇi śyāmā mā ke;
Mon, tui dekh ār āmi dekhi, ār jeno keu nāhi dekhe —

'Hold the adorable Mother Śyāmā to your heart, O my mind, by means of your careful service; see Her yourself, and let me see Her, and take care that nobody else sees Her besides.'

In your heart you are just alone there, and there is the Divine Mother alone, and nobody else besides. This is the highest state of your mind. You are entering into it through steady practice. And through our moral life, we shall be able to advance in that direction.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, the *yogī* in this way should always try to discipline and control his or her mind and the inner forces. He should be a *yata cittātmā,* 'one who has disciplined one's body and mind'; *yata* means 'disciplined', and *yati* is 'one who has disciplined the mind'; it also refers to a *sannyāsin*. *Yata cittātmā* means that the *citta* as well as the *ātmā* should be

controlled. Here *ātmā* means the body. He should also be a *nirāśīḥ,* 'desireless'; in him or her there should be no desire for the mind to go out. *Aparigrahaḥ* is 'taking no gift from others'. So many gifts are offered to you, and when you go on accepting all those gifts, then your mind is gone out. *Aparigraha* is a great virtue in *yoga;* it is so mentioned in one of the *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patañjali also (2. 30). When a person leads a worldly life, he or she needs help from people; but in this path of Self-realization, none of those things will be helpful to us at all. So, this wonderful virtue, this *aparigraha*, comes automatically to the spiritual aspirant when he or she realizes that, 'after all, others can give me only money or furniture, this and that. But I don't find any use for them. I am not in search of them. I am in search of something higher.'

Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues:

शुचौ देशे प्रतिष्ठाप्य स्थिरमासनमात्मनः ।
नात्युच्छ्रितं नातिनीचं चैलाजिनकुशोत्तरम् ॥११॥

Śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthiram āsanam ātmanaḥ;
Nātyucchritam nātinīcam cailājinakuśottaram — 6. 11

'Having established his or her seat in a clean spot, firm, neither too high nor too low, and made of a cloth, a skin, and *Kuśa*-grass, arranged consecutively.'

That it is a science is understood from the subject described here. The whole thing is a science, precision as regards what to do, and how to do; everything is mentioned here. Select a clean place, *śucau deśe*; for what? For this meditation; *sthiram āsanam ātmanaḥ,* 'provide for oneself a steady seat'. The *āsana* must be steady. Then only the body can be steady, the mind can be steady. A shaky *āsana* is no use. And so, *śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthiram āsanam ātmanaḥ*. Then again, the details are given; very, very thoughtful observations are made; *nātyucchritam nātinīcam*, 'neither too high, nor too low'; both are harmful for meditation; you may fall down, or something might fall on you—all these are possible. Water may accumulate if you are in a pit-like place. Next *, cailājinakuśottaram;* three things are needed for the seat: first, an ordinary matting of grass; that

is for protection from dampness; over that, a deer skin, and over that a piece of soft cotton cloth; *cailājinakuśa;* three things, one by one; the lowest one is *kuśa* and the highest one is *caila,* 'cloth'. What a beautiful detailed description is given! Having thus prepared the seat, now you are the experimenter in the science of *yoga*. This is just the preparation for it, like setting up a scientific laboratory.

Then, what will you do?

तत्रैकाग्रं मनः कृत्वा यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रियः ।
उपविश्यासने युञ्ज्याद्योगमात्मविशुद्धये ॥१२॥

Tatraikāgram manaḥ kṛtvā yatacittendriyakriyaḥ;
Upaviśyāsane yuñjyāt yogam ātmaviśuddhaye — 6. 12

'There, seated on that seat, making the mind one-pointed, and subduing the action of the mind and the senses, let him or her practise *yoga* for the purification of the heart.'

Then, *tatraikāgram manaḥ kṛtvā*, 'there, trying to make the mind one-pointed'; *yatacittendriyakriyaḥ*, 'by regulating and controlling the activities of the *citta,* "mind", and *indriya*, "the sensory system"'; *upaviśya āsane*, 'sitting on that seat'; *yuñjyāt yogam*, 'you may practise *yoga*'. For what purpose? *Átmaviśuddhaye*, 'to purify oneself'. You have not to bring about the Divine there; the Divine is already there, but these obstructions to Its manifestation are there also. You have to remove all those obstructions. Then the Divine manifests itself, like fire hidden beneath the ashes; the fire is there, but the ashes won't allow you to see the fire. Remove the ashes, and the fire will become manifest. Here it is only a question of manifestation; Vedanta holds that you don't have to create the Divine within; it is already there. Now, further instruction is being given. How careful the teacher of this science is! What a scientific approach to the subject!

समं कायशिरोग्रीवं धारयन्नचलं स्थिरः ।
संप्रेक्ष्य नासिकाग्रं स्वं दिशश्चानवलोकयन् ॥१३॥

Samam kāyaśirogrīvam dhārayan acalam sthiraḥ;

Samprekṣya nāsikāgram svam diśaḥ ca anvalokayan—6. 13

'Let one firmly hold his or her body, head, and neck erect and still, (with the eye-balls fixed, as if) gazing at the tip of one's nose, and not looking around.'

There, on that seat, keep your body straight; the three parts of the body, *kāya*, *śiras* and *grīvā*, 'body, head, and neck', must be straight and held steady. The entire spinal system should be straight and steady. Sitting in a bending posture is not proper. Therefore, this is emphasized, a steady body. This is a sign of alertness: *dhārayan acalam sthiraḥ*, 'absolutely steady, no movement at all'. *Samprekṣya nāsikāgram*, 'the mind is being concentrated on the Atman. In that state the eyes will be absolutely steady'. Śaṅkarācārya explains the words '*as if* looking at the tip of the nose'. The tip of the nose is *not* the subject of meditation; the subject is the Atman.

Diśaśca anavalokayan, 'not looking about here and there to the four sides'; you should not allow the mind to wander. That means we are now *within* this human system, going inwards. The outer world is left behind. That is how we begin this science and technique of *yoga* practice.

प्रशान्तात्मा विगतभीर्ब्रह्मचारिव्रते स्थित:।
मन: संयम्य मच्चित्तो युक्त आसीत मत्पर: ॥१४॥

Praśāntātmā vigatabhīḥ brahmacārivrate sthitaḥ;
Manaḥ samyamya maccitto yukta āsīta matparaḥ — 6. 14

'With the heart serene and fearless, firm in the vow of a *brahmacāri* or celibate, with the mind controlled, and ever thinking of Me, let him or her sit (in *yoga*) having Me as the supreme Goal.'

Praśāntātmā, 'one with a tranquil mind'; then, *vigatabhīḥ*, 'fearless'. We are going to achieve that state of fearlessness. As a creature in this world, we are subject to fear from animals, insects, birds and other human beings; all are subject to fear. But, here we are going to achieve the state of fearlessness. In no other way can we achieve fearlessness except by spiritual realization. *Brahmacāri vrate sthitaḥ*, 'engaged in the practice of *brahmacarya'*. *Manaḥ samyamya maccitto*, 'thus disciplining the mind and fixing it on Me', i.e. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as the inner Self of all; *yukta āsīta*

matparaḥ, 'one should sit becoming steady and established entirely in Me'. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the goal of all the struggle that human beings are undergoing. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is called *Yogeśvara,* the Lord of *yoga*. We are in search of the *Yogeśvara* through *yoga*. In the last verse of the last chapter of this *Gītā*, you will get this word in *yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇaḥ*, 'where there is Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the Master of *yoga*'. All the struggle is only for that, to become one with the Divine; that is a great achievement and that makes you one with all, because the Divine is in all beings. This is the individual realizing its universality, here and now, in this very body.

When you practise thus, what happens?

युञ्जन्नेवं सदात्मानं योगी नियतमानसः ।
शान्तिं निर्वाणपरमां मत्संस्थामधिगच्छति ॥१५॥

Yuñjan evam sadātmānam yogī niyatamānasaḥ;
Śāntim nirvāṇaparamām matsamsthām adhigacchati — 6. 15

'Thus always keeping the mind steadfast, the *yogī* of subdued mind attains the peace residing in Me—the peace which culminates in *Nirvāṇa* (*Mokṣa*).'

Yuñjan evam, 'thus practising *yoga*'; *sadā*, 'always'; *ātmānam*, 'using oneself' as a great instrument to achieve this spiritual development through *yoga*; by doing what? *Niyatamānasaḥ*, 'with disciplined mind', you achieve *śāntim*, 'great peace'. What is that peace? *Nirvāṇa paramām,* 'peace that will lead you to *nirvāṇa*', complete spiritual realization transcending this world of duality and relativity—that is called *nirvāṇa*. When all this relativity is transcended, in that state which was achieved by Buddha and achieved by many great sages, one gets peace. *Nirvāṇa paramām śāntim*, '*śānti* that comes out of that *nirvāṇa'; mat samsthām*, 'that state of being established in Me'. In Me, one realizes one's fullness. So*, mat samsthām adhigacchati*, 'one achieves that state'. This is a brief description of the *yoga* practice from the beginning: preparing a seat, steadying one's body and mind, and then going deeper. All outlined in a short statement of a few verses.

Now, certain directions are given if you want to achieve success in this path. Our country has seen people doing all sorts of austerities—like fasting for a long time, standing on one leg in the hot sun, etc. Even Christian mystics in the early period have done a lot of such austerities, and the greatest teachers have said that these are useless and meaningless. There have been Christian mystics who have constantly beaten their body with sticks, just to go beyond body-consciousness. But, the greatest teachers never allowed this kind of senseless, physical mortification. So, a serene attitude in spiritual life has to come through *yoga*. It came through Buddha. He also did a lot of mortification like fasting, and became very weak. And then, after taking food given by a girl, Sujātā, he sat in meditation to realize the truth. Ultimately, we find in Buddha's address to his disciples: 'I found, in the beginning, everybody was undergoing physical mortification. I too fasted for long, and one day, I wanted to stand up; I had no strength and I fell down. I touched my belly here in the front and I could feel my backbone. So weak I had become. Then, the thought came to me. What a foolish thing I am doing! This body is the only instrument I have with which I can realize the highest truth. I am weakening it. I am doing something very wrong. No, I shall not do it.' Then came that great message, the *madhya-panthā,* 'the middle path'. Neither too much austerity nor too much sensory indulgence, but the middle path. Most of the time you have to devote yourself to spiritual practice; that is the *madhya-panthā*, which later on Buddha expounded to his five disciples at Saranath, in Benares, after his enlightenment.

The same idea comes here in the *Gītā*. In a healthy spiritual life, there is no place for senseless mortification, for useless dry asceticism. You can hear the language of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in this connection. He says in the very next verse:

नात्यश्नतस्तु योगोऽस्ति न चैकान्तमनश्नत: ।
न चातिस्वप्नशीलस्य जाग्रतो नैव चार्जुन ॥१६॥

Nātyaśnatastu yogo'sti na caikāntamanaśnataḥ;
Na cātisvapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna — 6. 16

‘(Success in) *yoga* is not for the person who eats too much or does not eat at all for long periods; nor, O Arjuna, for one who sleeps too much or keeps awake for long.’

One who eats too much cannot be a *yogī*. One who does not eat at all, such a one also cannot be a *yogī.* See, both are mentioned. *Nātyaśnatastu*, *ati* means ‘too much’; *aśnataḥ* means ‘for one who is eating’. Similarly, *na caikāntam anaśnataḥ*, ‘not for those who practise fasting for long periods’; such persons also cannot become *yogīs*. Similarly, *na ca ati svapnaśīlasya*, ‘not for one who sleeps too much’; such persons also cannot be *yogīs*. Then, *jāgrato naiva cārjuna*, ‘O Arjuna, surely not for one who keeps awake all the time’; such men and women also cannot become *yogīs*. This is the negative side. The positive side is given to us in the next verse:

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।
युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥१७॥

Yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu;
Yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhahā — 6. 17

‘To one who is temperate in eating and recreation, in the effort for work, and in sleep and wakefulness, *yoga* becomes the destroyer of misery.’

What a beautiful statement! How much of sane logic you find in this statement! *Yuktāhāra vihārasya*, ‘moderate in *ahāra,* food, and *vihāra*, recreation’; *yukta ceṣṭasya karmasu*, ‘moderate in engagement of work’. Always being engaged in work is not good, and laziness also is not good; *yuktasvapnāvabodhasya*, ‘moderate in sleep and in waking’. To such a person, ‘*yoga* becomes the remover of all sorrow’, *yogo bhavati duḥkhahā*. That is how we can achieve the fruit of *yoga.*

This is the wisest advice given to a practitioner in spiritual life. People have done all sorts of spiritual practices; even now people do, without knowing the truth expounded by great teachers like Buddha, Kṛṣṇa, Patañjali and others. They have their own inclination, and they follow that. Not much good can come through such practice. And so, this is the instruction given to us.

So, a true *yogī* is just a normal, healthy human being; only his or her search is for something deeper, and it is inward, not outward. Outward dimension one has finished. One has discharged all one's responsibilities; he or she had a family, gave in marriage all the children, and is free now; then one can resort to this *yoga* as the greatest experience of one's life. Or, those who from youth itself are devoted to this; they are wonderful! They had no attraction for worldly life and started from youth along this *yoga* path—both are welcome. Spiritual life and *yoga* can be taken recourse to at any time, at any stage of life; whenever you feel that you are fit for it, you enter into it. It is no use hurrying up on this matter. 'I am not fit for it now. I have got many other things to do.' Okay, there is no harm. When the time is ripe, you'll get it.

Sri Ramakrishna gives this parable. A boy told his mother while going to bed, 'Mother, when I feel the call of nature, please wake me.' Mother said, 'When the call of nature comes, that itself will wake you; I don't need to wake you then.' Similarly, when the hunger for the Divine comes, you cannot resist it. And it comes some time to everybody. And, when it comes, take hold of it. That's a great thing. Don't neglect it then. And so, this is how great teachers advise. Unnecessary physical austerities are not prescribed by the greatest of teachers.

Once two women came from Calcutta to Dakshineswar to see Sri Ramakrishna. They went to him and saluted him. They were fasting all this while for they had resolved to eat only after they see him. After giving certain instructions to them, Sri Ramakrishna learnt about the fasting they had and said: 'Why have you come here fasting? You should have come after taking food. Women are but so many forms of my Divine Mother. I cannot bear to see them suffer. You are all images of the Mother of the Universe. Come after you have eaten and you will feel happy.' Then he fed them with offerings from the temple and said: 'You have eaten something. Now my mind is at peace. I cannot bear to see women fast.' (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* p. 432: 1996 edition: 24 May 1884). That is a very beautiful incident in the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.

So, here in the present *śloka,* we have this achievement from *yoga*, namely, an end to all sorrow.

Now, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will take us through that process of meditation and tell us what spiritual achievement takes place through meditation. These form a series of beautiful verses.

In the verses 16 and 17 of the sixth chapter of the *Gītā,* a very important truth has been conveyed to us, that extremes must be avoided, and a middle path must be taken, that which Buddha called, *madhya-panthā*. Neither too much austerity, nor too much sense indulgence. That is how we can grow spiritually. Anything else may just be 'religious'. If you do some kind of austerity, you can be religious, but in spiritual life its value is minimum. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said:

Yoga becomes the source of the destruction of all sorrow, if you follow the middle path of moderate eating, drinking, resting, working, etc. Not extremes; that is not good for the spiritual development. Buddha realized it from his own personal experience. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has given us that truth much earlier, in the *Gītā*.

Now, verse 18 begins to deal with the process and the technique of meditation. These are a few of the very important verses in the sixth chapter:

यदा विनियतं चित्तमात्मन्येवावतिष्ठते ।
नि:स्पृह: सर्वकामेभ्यो युक्त इत्युच्यते तदा ॥१८॥

Yadā viniyatam cittam ātmanyeva avatiṣṭhate;
Niḥspṛhaḥ sarvakāmebhyo yukta ityucyate tadā — 6. 18

'When the completely controlled mind rests serenely in the Self alone, free from longing after all desires, then is one called steadfast (in the Self).'

The mind can be said to be *yuktaḥ,* 'established in *yoga*', when *viniyatam cittam*, 'the *citta* or mind, which has been disciplined'; *ātmanyeva avatiṣṭhate*, 'remains only in the Atman', not going here and there. Then, we can say that the mind is *yuktaḥ;* it has achieved *yoga*. This is the first statement. Then *niḥspṛhaḥ sarvakāmebhyaḥ*, 'no external desires come and disturb the mind'. It is absolutely established in itself. *Yukta ityucyate tadā,* 'then it is said to be *yukta,* united with God'. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives an example, a very familiar one, from our literature:

यथा दीपो निवातस्थो नेङ्गते सोपमा स्मृता ।
योगिनो यतचित्तस्य युञ्जतो योगमात्मनः ॥१९॥

Yathā dīpo nivātastho neṅgate sopamā smṛtā;
Yogino yatacittasya yuñjato yogam ātmanaḥ — 6. 19

‘“As a lamp in a spot sheltered from the wind does not flicker”—even such has been the simile used for a *yogī* of subdued mind, practising concentration in the Self.’

As an oil lamp, which is kept in a place free from wind, is absolutely steady in its flame, such is the example of that mind which has become steady, i.e. without any fluctuation. The *yoga* state is compared to the state of a steady flame. When you see the flame moving all the time, it is because there is wind all around and it is influenced by all those wind currents. But, when it is put in a place where external influences cannot touch, it remains absolutely steady. That is the nature of the human mind in the state of *yoga,* absolutely steady. It is a very difficult process; a long training is needed, and yet it is not unattainable; it has been attained by people, and anyone can attain to *yoga*. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa will tell us in a series of verses the nature of that meditation, and the result of that meditation or *yoga*.

Yathā dīpo nivātastho na iṅgate; iṅganam means ‘shaking’ or in a wavy motion. It doesn’t shake, it doesn’t flicker; *sopamā smṛtā,* ‘that is the well-known comparison to the state of the mind in *yoga*’; *yogino yata cittasya*, ‘of a *yogī* who has disciplined his or her mind’; *yuñjato yogam ātmanaḥ*, ‘of one who is practising concentration in the Self’.

In fact, sage Patañjali begins his famous aphorisms on *yoga* with this very truth: Two states of the human mind are there—the scattered state and the gathered state. The scattered state is the normal state of life. Mind is scattered among a thousand things. The gathered state is, what you call, sleep. You are gathered regularly, and then you are quiet, absolutely calm and quiet. But, the same gathered state can be of a new type; you deliberately gather the mind. That is the *yoga,* which Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to expound in a few verses.

The gathered state requires an effort on the human part. Nature doesn't do it for you. Nature has given you the capacity, but you have to do it yourself. Therefore, this kind of unification and control of various states of the mind is what we are expected to do to become truly masters of ourselves. When the mind is in perfect control, life is absolutely free. That is why it is needed for everyone, even a small measure of it. You may not have the whole of it, but even a little measure of the control of the mind is beneficial. When anger arises in the mind, one must will to be able to take cognizance of it, see that it is rising, and stop it then and there. A well-controlled mind can do this. You can feel that anger is rising slowly, that it is getting stronger and stronger. These subtle experiences of emotional states we can easily detect with a trained mind and we can stop its growth before it explodes on others in the world. This capacity is needed for everyone in day-to-day life; it is needed for a happy human relationship, and, above all, to realize the Atman, to become fulfilled; that is the main purpose of *yoga*—to realize our own infinite nature with the help of this mind by proper discipline and the whole of that discipline is being mentioned here in its technical aspect as *yoga.*

This *dhyāna,* or meditation, is only one chapter in the *Gītā. Yoga* of the *Gītā* is much wider than this *yoga* of meditation. It is only an accessory item among the total *yoga* of the *Gītā,* because the *yoga* of the *Gītā* contains emphasis on day-to-day work, human relationships, and so many other things. And meditation is added to this list because it helps you in achieving success in all those spheres; so *dhyāna* is only a part of the total *yoga* of the *Gītā,* not the whole thing. Some people may not be interested in meditation, but still they can be *yogīs*.

As Swami Vivekananda would say, 'A *karma yogī,* without the help of other *yogas,* can also realize the truth, realize the Atman; it is a path by itself.' But, it is helpful if it is accompanied by the training of the mind in meditation. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa adds this teaching to the complete *yoga* of the *Gītā*. That is why, of the eighteen chapters, the sixth chapter alone is devoted to *Dhyāna Yoga.* That is the significance of *dhyāna* for spiritual life in general and *yoga* life of the *Gītā* in particular. And then:

यत्रोपरमते चित्तं निरुद्धं योगसेवया ।
यत्र चैवात्मनात्मानं पश्यन्नात्मनि तुष्यति ॥२०॥

Yatroparamate cittam niruddham yogasevayā;
Yatra caivātmanātmānam paśyan ātmani tuṣyati — 6. 20

'When the mind, absolutely restrained by the practice of concentration, attains quietude, and when seeing the Self by the self, one is satisfied in the Self.'

A series of verses are coming now, all beginning with 'when'. 'When this happens, when that happens,' and, at the end, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say, 'this is going to be the result'. So, first *yatroparamate cittam niruddham*, 'when the *citta* or mind becomes inwardly drawn; *uparamate,* indrawn to itself'; *yogasevayā,* 'by the practice of *yoga'; yatra caivātmanātmānam paśyan ātmani tuṣyati*, 'when by seeing the Self in one's own self, you delight only in that Self'; that is a beautiful expression. By this withdrawing of the mind from external things, we are not going to some state of emptiness of mind. We are going to the infinite dimension of the Divine within and we find infinite delight in it. When that happens:

सुखमात्यन्तिकं यत्तद्बुद्धिग्राह्यमतीन्द्रियम् ।
वेत्ति यत्र न चैवायं स्थितश्चलति तत्त्वतः ॥२१॥

Sukham ātyantikam yat tat buddhigrāhyam atīndriyam;
Vetti yatra na caivāyam sthitaścalati tattvataḥ — 6. 21

'When one feels that infinite bliss, which is perceived by the (purified) intellect and which transcends the senses, and established wherein one never departs from one's real state.'

Sukham ātyantikam yat tat buddhigrāhyam atīndriyam; 'supreme happiness', *ātyantikam sukham.* You begin to experience that *ātyantikam sukham*, infinite happiness*; yat tat buddhigrāhyam*, 'that which your *buddhi* can grasp'; *atīndriyam*, 'the sense organs cannot grasp it'. When the *buddhi* can grasp that wonderful joy that comes from the contact with the Atman, that joy is *buddhigrāhyam;* it is also *atīndriyam*, 'the sense organs can never go there'; their power is very, very limited. Even scientists ask, what

is the speed of the nerve impulse? The sense organs work *through* the nervous system and the speed of the nerve impulse will determine how much the senses can do. Hardly some 200 kilometres per hour is the speed of a nerve impulse. How ordinary it is. How can it penetrate into the truth of things?

So, *atīndriyam* is constantly emphasized: this higher experience is beyond the sensory and nervous system. So, the sensory system has no value here. When you sit in meditation, you say good-bye to the sensory system. They stay outside. They don't function here. That kind of attitude you have to take towards the sensory system; not for it's own sake, but to go higher, to penetrate deeper. Even in physical science, very often, you have to go deeper, so that nature can reveal her mystery. But, these senses are useful only in the early stage of human life, particularly while dealing with the external world.

Therefore, *buddhigrāhyam atīndriyam*; here only *buddhi* or enlightened reason plays a role because, nearest to the Atman is *buddhi;* it is extremely subtle, and, when it is properly trained, it develops a high penetrating power. That is the language used in the Upaniṣads. Any energy can be made capable of deep penetration by giving proper training. Take radiation; you give it a training, high frequency training; then it becomes highly penetrating as an X-ray, though, by itself, it was a very flimsy radiation. Just a ray of laser can make high frequency radiation with the capacity to penetrate into the heart of things. That state, applied to the *buddhi,* is called *buddhigrāhyam.* That *buddhi* can capture this truth of the infinite joy coming from the realization of the Atman.

So, *buddhigrāhyam atīndriyam*. This idea comes from the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* (I. iii. 12)*: Dṛśyate tvagryayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ*—this Atman is present in all beings, but it is lying hidden. Will it always remain hidden? No, we can discover it: *dṛśyate,* 'it is seen'. How? *Agryayā buddhyā*, 'when the ordinary *buddhi* becomes concentrated, one-pointed'; that is the nature of that expression. How do you get it? By training the *buddhi* in dealing with subtle, more subtle and still more subtle realities, the *buddhi* finally gets the capacity to realize the subtlest reality, the Atman. *Sūkṣma buddhi* is capable of realizing the subtle, and *sthūla*

buddhi is capable of realizing only the gross. *Sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ*, 'by those who have trained themselves to perceive subtle and subtler truths'. Such people are called *sūkṣmadarśīs*. So, a *sūkṣmadarśī* can realize the Atman by his or her *sukṣma buddhi*; and one becomes a *sūkṣma darśī* because of his or her one-pointed mind. Let us make the mind as pointed as possible. That is the nature of the training of the human mind.

So, in that context, the Upaniṣad has said, *dṛśyate*, that the Atman 'can be realized', not by the senses, not by the *manas*, but by the *buddhi*. *Buddhi* is pure reason, as we call it in the modern language, but it is the purest of the psychic energy that you have. 'Psychic energies' mean all the energies in you. You go on training them, making it a little better; then it becomes the mind; making it still better, it becomes the *buddhi.* From the same energy, namely, that psychic force, the *buddhi* must be developed. Earlier in the *Gītā,* Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said so many times, 'develop *buddhi*, develop *buddhi*.' Through education you develop that *buddhi* which can discriminate between the real and the unreal, and penetrate into the heart of things. That is called *buddhi*.

So, *vetti yatra*, 'when one realizes this', in that state one will know this truth. And then, *na caivāyam sthitaścalati tattvataḥ*, 'one never falls down from the state of that truth'; *na calati*, mind 'doesn't fall down' from the state of truth. It is fixed on that. That is the state, absolutely steady.

यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः ।
यस्मिन्स्थितो न दुःखेन गुरुणापि विचाल्यते ॥२२॥

Yam labdhvā cāparam lābham manyate nādhikam tataḥ;
Yasminsthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate — 6. 22

'Having obtained which, one regards no other acquisition superior to that, and where established, one is not moved even by heavy sorrow.'

Manyate nādhikam tataḥ, 'after attaining which you will not find anything better to achieve'. That highest state of joy you get there. *Yam labdhvā cāparam lābham tataḥ adhikam na manyate*, 'you don't consider at all that there could be something higher to achieve'. Your mind itself will tell you that you have achieved the highest. There is nothing higher than

this. *Yasminsthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate*, ‘established in which you are never shaken even by the heaviest of sorrow’. Even a little sorrow can shake us, but when established in the Atman, even the heaviest sorrow will not shake us. That is the expression: ‘by even the heaviest sorrow’; *duḥkha* means ‘sorrow’; *na vicālyate*, ‘is not shaken’; one remains steady.

तं विद्याद्दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसंज्ञितम् ।
स निश्चयेन योक्तव्यो योगोऽनिर्विण्णचेतसा ॥२३॥

Tam vidyāt duḥkha-samyoga-viyogam yogasamjñitam;
Sa niścayena yoktavyo yogo’nirviṇṇacetasā — 6. 23

‘Let that be known as the state called by the name of *yoga*—a state of severance from the contact with pain. This *yoga* should be practised with perseverance, undisturbed by depression of heart.’

Tam vidyāt, ‘know that to be’; *duḥkha-samyoga-viyogam yogasamjñitam*, know that to be *yoga,* which is *duḥkha-samyoga-viyogam*, ‘the disassociation of the association with pain, with sorrow’. See the language. *Duḥkha-samyoga* is one’s normal life, ‘associated with sorrow’. Just a pinprick in the skin and you get pain; that is called *duḥkha-samyoga*; *viyoga* means its absence; that association with pain is not there. Things that are painful happen, but you don’t feel it, you don’t worry over it; *yogasamjñitam*, ‘this is known as *yoga*’; *sa niścayena yoktavyaḥ*, ‘that must be practised with great determination’; *niścaya* means, ‘certainty’; it is a possibility for everyone; it is not a mere theory, it is not a dogma, it can be realized, it can be achieved; so, *niścayena yoktavyaḥ yogaḥ*, ‘this *yoga* must be practised with great determination’; *anirviṇṇacetasā*, ‘without any kind of depression of mind’; steadily this *yoga* practice must be carried out. You may not achieve its results straight away; so, you may be inclined to give it up. No, continue, let it take a hundred years; what does that matter? Let me do something worthwhile; let me continue this wonderful search for my own true nature, my own true dimension. What is that dimension? What is that profound mystery? Let me try to understand it. This is the method by which we try to understand that truth. You found this type of determination, facing all privation and even death, during the early nineteenth century gold rush to the Western part of America.

So, here is just a couple of verses dealing with this subject. We can achieve *yoga* when we work hard for it. Remember that it is not a dogma or creed. That is why in India we scientifically analyse the whole world of religion. There are two classifications of religion. One is the ethnical classification based on dogma and creed; the other one is scientific classification. Ethnical is Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, etc. The other, the scientific classification, gives us *Karma Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Rāja Yoga*, *Jñāna Yoga;* this is called the scientific classification. Here, *Gītā* deals with the scientific classification of religions, cutting across all these ethnical differences and limitations. And therefore, 'this *yoga* must be assiduously followed and some results gained in this very life', that is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's exhortation.

And now Śrī Kṛṣṇa says,

सङ्कल्पप्रभवान्कामांस्त्यक्त्वा सर्वानशेषत: ।
मनसैवेन्द्रियग्रामं विनियम्य समन्तत: ॥२४॥

Saṅkalpaprabhavān kāmān tyaktvā sarvān aśeṣataḥ;
Manasaivendriyagrāmam viniyamya samantataḥ — 6. 24

'Abandoning without reserve all desires born of *saṅkalpa*, and completely restraining, by the mind alone, the whole group of senses from their objects in all directions.'

Saṅkalpa prabhavān kāmān tyaktvā, 'renouncing all the *kāmas* or desires, outgoing cravings, which are born of *saṅkalpa*'. When they are properly controlled; *sarvān aśeṣataḥ*, 'all of them completely'; *manasā eva indriyagrāmam viniyamya samantataḥ*, 'all the sense organs are slowly controlled and disciplined through the *manas* alone'. *Manas* or mind is the instrument for controlling the sensory system. *Manas* itself is a very subtle sense organ; they call it the sixth sense organ. And yet, it has the power to co-ordinate all the five sense organs. Through the *manas*, therefore, we gather all the energies of the sensory system.

In the third chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, *manas* is compared to the reins, the senses are compared to the horses, body is known as the chariot, and *buddhi* is the charioteer in whose hands the reins are held. This is a

beautiful comparison. *Buddhi*, *manas*, sensory system, and the body—these are the four agents. Each one of these agents has its own function to perform. Here, the *manas* is to control the sensory system; the reins have to control the horses. If you want to control the horses, you must have the reins. So, that is why it is stated 'control the sensory system through the *manas*', and this controlling is done by *buddhi,* luminous reason-will*;* he is the ultimate master; he is the controller of the whole of life's journey. That is *buddhi*, the charioteer in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. *Samantataḥ* means 'from all sides'. If there are five horses, and one controls only three horses, two are left behind to themselves. That will not do. You must control all the five horses. Then only the journey will be comfortable and capable of leading us to our destination.

शनैः शनैरुपरमेद्बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया ।
आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥२५॥

Śanaiḥ śanaiḥ uparamet buddhyā dhṛtigṛhītayā;
Átmasamstham manaḥ kṛtvā na kiñcidapi cintayet — 6 .25

'With the reason or intellect joined with will, with the mind fastened on the Self, let one attain quietude step by step: let him or her not think of anything else.'

Now, the exact nature of meditation is described here. *Śanaiḥ śanaiḥ uparamet*, you can't attain quietude all at once; *śanaiḥ*, 'slowly, gradually'; *uparamet,* 'withdraw'. Great things can be done only slowly and gradually. They cannot be done quickly. If you try to do anything quickly, you will get into trouble. Either physical trouble or mental trouble will come. So, do it slowly, slowly; *buddhyā dhṛtigṛhītayā*, 'with will-power assisted by *buddhi'*—with all these energies gathered together. *Átmasamstham manaḥ kṛtvā*, 'making the mind slowly settled in the Self'; *na kiñcit api cintayet*, 'don't think of anything else'. What is the next step?

यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।
ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥२६॥

Yato yato niścarati manaścañcalam asthiram;

Tatastato niyamyaitad ātmanyeva vaśam nayet — 6. 26

'Through whatever reason the restless, unsteady mind wanders away, let one, curbing it from that, bring it under the subjugation of the Self alone.'

The second advice is given in this verse, and we all need it whenever the mind goes out . *Yato yato niścarati manaḥ cañcalam asthiram*, 'whenever the mind, very fickle'; *asthiram*, 'never steady'; *cañcalam,* 'restless'; *niścarati*, 'goes out'; *tataḥ tato niyamya,* 'then and there, controlling it'; *ātmanyeva vaśam nayet,* 'bring it under the Atman alone'. This is a constant struggle, a war; for a long period it has to go on; there is no other way. But, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say later on at the question of Arjuna, 'the mind is controlled by constant practice'. That will be one of the questions of Arjuna, which is also everyone's, which Arjuna asks on our behalf, later in the *Gītā*.

प्रशान्तमनसं ह्येनं योगिनं सुखमुत्तमम् ।
उपैति शान्तरजसं ब्रह्मभूतमकल्मषम् ॥२७॥

Praśāntamanasam hyenam yoginam sukham uttamam;
Upaiti śāntarajasam brahmabhūtam akalmaṣam — 6. 27

'Verily, the supreme bliss comes to that *yogī* of perfectly tranquil mind, with passions quieted, Brahman-become, and freed from taint.'

Such a *yogī* is *praśānta manasam*, 'whose mind is perfectly calm and tranquil', for, he or she has practised *yoga* for long. The mind of such a one slowly becomes calmer and calmer; now it has become perfectly calm. *Sukham uttamam upaiti*, 'supremely pure happiness comes to him or her'. Various types of happiness you can have, but this is *uttamam sukham*, 'the best happiness' that you can ever have. Eating delicious food is also happiness, but this happiness is quite different; this is *uttamam sukham*, it consists in being in your own Self; it doesn't depend upon something else. *Śāntarajasam*, 'all *rajas,* restless energy, has been completely eliminated from the mind'. What a beautiful state! Why is the mind disturbed? It is owing to its *rājasic* nature. That *rajas* element makes the mind run here and there. That is the meaning of *rajas*. *Tamas* and *rajas*, both these elements make the mind absolutely unfit for high purposes; when these elements

prevail in the mind, the mind can then be used for very ordinary purposes only. So, in this case, the *rajas* element 'has been eliminated'; it has become *śāntarajasam.* There is nothing to shake it, nothing to make it jump about as it were. It is the *rājasic* mind that runs about all the time. Next, the *yogī* is *brahmabhūtam*, 'the mind has become one with Brahman', and *akalmaṣam*, 'free from all impurities', it is the purest mind; he or she is of this nature.

Sri Ramakrishna says, 'pure *manas*, pure *buddhi*, pure Atman are one and the same.' We use different words for various states of this inner life, but actually *śuddha* or pure *manas, śuddha buddhi, śuddha* Atman are one and the same. So, that *śuddha manas* which itself is *śuddha* Atman, which itself is *śuddhā buddhi,* is *akalmaṣam*, free from all impurities of the *manas;* when such a state comes within us, we become *brahmabhūtam*, 'one with Brahman'.

There is a famous passage by Plato, in his drama 'Freedom', in the *Republic of Plato*, his famous book. You will find there this beautiful statement:

'Thought is best when the mind is gathered into herself and none of these things trouble her, neither sound, nor sight, nor pain, nor pleasure; when she has as little as possible to do with the body, no bodily sense of feeling, but it is aspiring after a pure being, that is the state of mind which is the best.'

This is exactly the idea of Vedanta, speaking about the mind being controlled and disciplined and concentrated on the infinite Self in man. That is the state in which the mind is at its highest and best. This is the teaching of all the mystics—Sufi mystics, Christian mystics, and Hindu mystics. This mind needs its training and the turning towards the infinite Self. You turn the mind out and do work, produce wealth, improve economy. That is beautiful, but it is one side of human life. *Gītā* places great emphasis on that life of *karma,* action, *pravṛtti*. But, the *Gītā* also says, do this also, develop this capacity also, the capacity to withdraw, to unify the mental energies through meditation. These two must go side by side. Then only you will have complete efficiency in your life. That is what the *Gītā* wants to give to

humanity. I have referred to this in the ‘Introduction’ earlier in the first volume.

In the second chapter of the *Gītā* (verse 50) you found efficiency defined as *yoga*, ‘*yoga* is efficiency in action’, *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam,* and by efficiency is meant a double efficiency, namely, outward work efficiency and inward spiritual efficiency. That is the speciality of the *yoga* of the *Gītā*.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa adds this idea of meditation also: trying to understand our own true nature. We don’t let our minds become merely machine-like and get things done outside, and when the work is accomplished, throw the mind away on the scrap heap; that is how old machines are treated. Human beings should not be treated so. After heavy work you should become free, you should become pure, you should feel that you are up to yourself. *If that is to be attained, you have to follow this emphasis of the Gītā: external life* plus *internal life.* A human being is not a junk to be discarded. He or she has got an inner life; he or she has to achieve something within oneself, and not merely be a machine to be used by people for producing goods and services. That attitude of mind towards the human beings should be completely changed.

So here, in this verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that, in this particular state, the mind of human beings becomes one with Brahman. We have achieved our fulfilment here on earth. We were working and will continue to work, but the whole work will become different. It is so full of the spiritual element that the work ceases to be work. It becomes *no work*. It is a teaching of Taoist philosophy, Zen Buddhism, and Vedanta, which we have discussed in the fourth chapter.

These are a few verses dealing with this process of inner penetration.

युञ्जन्नेवं सदात्मानं योगी विगतकल्मषः ।
सुखेन ब्रह्मसंस्पर्शमत्यन्तं सुखमश्नुते ॥२८॥

Yuñjannevam sadātmānam yogī vigatakalmaṣaḥ;
Sukhena brahmasamsparśam atyantam sukham aśnute — 6. 28

‘A *yogī*, freed from all taints, constantly engaging the mind thus, attains with ease the infinite bliss of contact with Brahman.’

Sukhena brahmasamsparśam atyantam sukham aśnute; brahmasamsparśam, ‘the touch of Brahman, the touch of God, the touch of the Divine’. Devotees can understand this language. If you touch the feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa once, what a wonderful joy it would give! Therefore, this *sukhena brahmasamsparśam aśnute*, ‘one achieves the touch of Brahman very easily’; *atyantam sukham aśnute*, ‘one enjoys infinite happiness’. By eating a nice meal we feel happy; getting a kind word, we feel happy. There are so many occasions when we get small measures of happiness. These are all little titbits of happiness in human life; but consider the ocean of happiness which is Brahman itself, *ānanda svarūpa,* of the nature of bliss; and these persons are in touch with That. We cannot even imagine it. But the truth is that, many of the books in our tradition have said that you will feel infinite joy in every pore of the body when you realize God. Those who have realized God have conveyed to us the infinite joy, because God is the essence of joy, ‘the ocean of joy’, *ānanda sāgara*; that is the language we use. So, little bits of *ānanda* we get here; it is only a little, truncated, *ānanda* derived from that infinite *ānanda* of Brahman. And so, you give up these little ones, go to the very source of *ānanda*, that is God itself. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV. iii. 32) says, *etasyaiva ānandasya anyāni bhūtāni mātrām upajīvanti,* ‘every *ānanda* or bliss enjoyed by beings in this world is a little particle of that infinite *ānanda’,* which is *brahmānanda* or *ātmānanda*.

And now, this *yoga* gives you that *brahmasamsparśam*, ‘the touch of Brahman, the infinite *ānanda*’; *atyantam sukham aśnute,* ‘such people enjoy immense happiness’. Therefore, the *Gītā* said, ‘we cannot achieve infinite happiness with our present state of mind.’ We can only say, it is a very great joy, but we cannot appreciate its exact significance. In our present state, we are satisfied with the little joys that we get in our normal life. Even that itself is a great thing for us; we go into an ecstasy getting that little joy. If I have no employment, and I try hard to get a job, and after six months I get a job; I am in ‘infinite’ bliss. That is one human yardstick for joy. This is one type of human joy; various levels of human joys are there.

So, just imagine, multiply these joys infinitely, and that is the joy of Brahman.

Now, this is the teaching Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives to Arjuna and to all of us through him.

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।
ईक्षते योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः ॥२९॥

Sarvabhūtastham ātmānam sarvabhūtāni cātmani;
Īkṣate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ — 6. 29

'With the heart concentrated by *yoga,* with the eye of evenness for all things, he or she beholds the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self.'

A few more verses are there before you get to Arjuna's question, and in these verses Śrī Kṛṣṇa takes us through various subjects before Arjuna raises his question. Mind becomes calm and steady. One develops a spirit of equality, one has that kind of tremendous achievement when one becomes one with Brahman. That is described in these few verses as the achievement by the followers of *yoga.* So, in verse 29, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says what constitutes a high teaching in Vedanta.

With the heart concentrated by *yoga*, with the eye of evenness for all beings, (sameness, *samatva*, *samadṛṣṭi*)*,* one beholds one's Self in all things and all things in the Self. To see everything in the Atman, and Atman in everything—that is the highest vision Vedanta promises to every human being.

Sarvabhūtastham ātmānam, 'the Atman existing in all beings', and, *sarvabhūtāni cātmani,* 'all beings existing in the Atman'; *īkṣate*, he or she 'sees' this kind of realization; *yogayuktātmā*, 'one who has achieved *yoga*', whose mind has become one in the spirit of *yoga*; *sarvatra samadarśanaḥ*, 'he or she sees equality everywhere', as the one infinite Atman; there is no high or low, no distinctions. The highest democracy comes here: we are perfectly equal with each other because one infinite Atman is present in all beings in its infinite fullness, not in fraction. *Samadarṣitva,* 'equality of vision', is a great teaching throughout the *Gītā*.

Our country needs this teaching more than any other country. We have always had this kind of differential way of looking at things and people. A person gets a little less money as salary, we look down upon him or her; one gets a little high salary, we look up to him or her. This kind of inequality is terrible in our society. This *Gītā* teaching will be a great blessing to us in the modern age: *Sarvatra samadarṣanaḥ,* 'one who sees equality everywhere'. He or she is a human being, whether in possession of more money or less money, why concern ourselves with that? That is not the main value of a human being, there is the infinite Atman within each. This teaching must inspire our people to make us part from caste and creed differences to true democracy in the socio-political field. A little bit of this *jñāna* of Brahman must come to us in the socio-political field. Then our democracy will be stronger and steady.

Then, Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses the word divine incarnation to mean Brahman; instead of saying 'he or she sees Brahman in all', Śrī Kṛṣṇa now puts it as 'he or she sees Me, an incarnation of God, in all':

यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति ।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥३०॥

Yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvam ca mayi paśyati;
Tasyāham na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati — 6. 30

'One who sees Me in all beings and sees all beings in Me, such a one never becomes separated from Me, nor do I become separated from him or her.'

Yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvam ca mayi paśyati, 'one who sees Me in all beings and all beings in Me'; *tasyāham na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati,* 'such a one will never be separated from Me, nor do I become separated from him or her'. We are always one, together.

सर्वभूतस्थितं यो मां भजत्येकत्वमास्थितः ।
सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि स योगी मयि वर्तते ॥३१॥

Sarvabhūtasthitam yo mām bhajatyekatvam āsthitaḥ;
Sarvathā vartamāno'pi sa yogī mayi vartate — 6. 31

‘One who, being established in unity, worships Me, who am dwelling in all beings, whatever his or her mode of life, that *yogī* abides in Me.’

Sarvabhūtasthitam yo mām bhajati, ‘one who worships Me, who exist in all beings’; Śrī Kṛṣṇa exists in all beings like a thread that runs through all the pearls in a garland, uniting all the pearls into one garland, as he says elsewhere in the *Gītā*; similarly, the Lord exists in all of us as the central thread of beings. *Bhajati ekatvam āsthitaḥ,* ‘worships Me being established in unity’; *sarvathā vartamāno’pi sa yogī mayi vartate*, ‘whatever may be his or her way of life, he or she always lives in Me’. One may be selling various things, or may be making shoes, or breaking stones on the road side, or sitting in the chair of an administrator; whatever may be his or her mode of life, such a person always lives in Me; that is the language. What a beautiful idea! We can see the best devotees in the most unusual places. We have seen in our religious history that an ordinary shoe-maker has realized the Divine, a simple house-wife has realised the Divine. Her status in society is very ordinary, but spiritually it is very high. So, this can happen to everyone. Whatever be your station in society, or the nature of your work in society, you are always living in the Lord Himself in this particular achievement; *sa yogī mayi vartate,* ‘that *yogī* lives in Me’ all the time.

आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन ।
सुखं वा यदि वा दु:खं स योगी परमो मत: ॥३२॥

Átmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati yo’rjuna;
Sukham vā yadi vā duḥkham sa yogī paramo mataḥ — 6. 32

‘One who judges pleasure or pain everywhere by the same standard as one applies to oneself, that *yogī*, O Arjuna, is regarded as the highest.’

Átmaupamyena, ‘as you feel about yourself’, so feel about others also. What is painful to you, you want to avoid; therefore, don’t inflict pain on others; as you feel for yourself, feel for others also. That is the universal maxim found in the Bible, Chinese thought, Indian thought, everywhere. Whatever is not pleasant to you don’t inflict it on others—that is the language.

So, *ātmaupamyena*, 'see others as you see yourself'; *sarvatra samam paśyati yo'rjuna*, 'one who sees with the sense of equality everywhere O Arjuna'; *sukham vā yadi vā duḥkham*, 'whether it is happiness or sorrow'. If something gives you sorrow, see that that sorrow is not inflicted on somebody else. That attitude must be there. *Sa yogī paramo mataḥ,* 'that *yogī* is considered to be supreme'. He or she has realized oneness with all.

What a tremendous change will come in our society when a bit of this teaching gets into our mind and heart. We do so much evil to others not knowing that if that evil were to come to us, we would have become really miserable. We don't know how to feel for others. That feeling of oneness is not there. That is the great evil that has been afflicting our society for centuries together. Swami Vivekananda said that many of our people do not have a feeling heart; there is the intellect; the brain is there, the heart is not there, concern for others is not there. That is why we have brought our society to the lowest level.

Now our society must have a revolutionary change. And Vedanta gives you the way to get that inner change in yourself, by which this *samadṛṣṭi* will come to you; then society will become really a heaven. It will be happiness to live in such a society. You need not go to any heaven above. Here itself we can create a heaven. A *Satya Yuga,* a Golden Age, can come in this world when people will understand this truth and practise even a little bit of it. Great teachers came for that purpose only. Sri Ramakrishna came in our time. What an extraordinary personality was he, suffused with this spirit of oneness! Swami Vivekananda, Sarada Devi, and every one of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna had the spirit of oneness. 'We are all one'. What a beautiful idea! That is why that Muslim revolutionary poet of Bengal, Kazi Nazrul Islam, when he wrote about Sri Ramakrishna, added this line: *Satya yuger puṇya smṛti kalite ānile tumi tāpas,* 'Hey *tāpas*, you brought the memory of *Satya Yuga* in this *Kali Yuga*'. What a beautiful idea! That Sri Ramakrishna has brought the memory of *Satya Yuga*. It is for us to assimilate this teaching and establish t©09he *Satya Yuga* in society. That is our responsibility. He has shown us the way; he has given us the inspiration. That is a great contribution of Sri Ramakrishna.

So, here, Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks of the *samadṛṣṭi*, *samatva*. Very difficult, but we have to achieve it. We have to give up our medieval heritage where everything was hierarchical. The king or aristocrat was there, enjoying nicely, having happiness all the time, surrounded by millions of people living in destitution and sorrow. That was our India. Even today, in many cases it is so. So many people working very hard so that a few, a handful, may live comfortably and happily! That will have to change thoroughly. That is the attitude the *Gītā* wants to develop in us and in all people all over the world.

This *samatā dṛṣṭi* is the sense of equality; and regarding this Arjuna will ask a question in the next *śloka:* 'it is a wonderful idea, this *samadṛṣṭi;* you have put it so nicely, but I find it very difficult to practise. Mind, I see, can never be in *samatva;* it always moves up and down; it is always wandering. How can I control this mind?' So, that question will take us to the next *śloka*. Arjuna's question is on your behalf, on behalf of millions of people, because it is everybody's problem. Śrī Kṛṣṇa handles this important subject from the next verse onwards.

The four verses, 29 to 32, of the sixth chapter dealt with that capacity of the human being to see the same divine Reality in all beings. This was declared as a fruit of this inward meditation.

The *Gītā's* main *yoga* is connected with daily life and work. But meditation-*yoga* has something to contribute to this *yoga* of the *Gītā,* which is integral *yoga;* all aspects of spiritual life are combined together. So, one chapter is devoted to this great subject of meditation. We studied earlier the verses dealing with this subject. And the last four verses in this section, verses 29 to 32, refer to this great achievement of *samadṛṣṭi*, *samabhāva*, as a result of that meditation. This achievement can be had through *bhakti* and *jñāna* also, as through this *dhyāna* path specially developed by Patañjali in his *Yoga-sūtras*. So, we should keep in mind that this achievement can be had through all these paths. And in the fifth chapter we have already seen the spirit of equality, *samabhāva*, coming from *jñāna*. In the seventh chapter and in several subsequent chapters, you will get the same achievement through *bhakti*. So, the idea is this: to see the same Atman in every being and remove the feeling of separateness out of which comes

evil, violence, hatred; everything evil comes from that sense of separateness.

So, this non-separateness, this *samatva-bhāva,* we have to achieve; and, for this, we have to go beyond the sensory level. At the sensory level everything is different. It is only when you go beyond the sensory level, that you find that supreme unity, pure consciousness, One and non-dual, behind everything in this universe. *And so, going beyond the sensory level is necessary in every path—bhakti, jñāna, karma* or *dhyāna;* the only difference is that, in this *dhyāna* or meditation path, and in this *jñāna* or spiritual knowledge, the path is rather difficult. But, in the *bhakti* path the same thing is achieved more easily. We don't do much violence to our own sensory nature. We go *with* it and this lower nature is *slowly* transcended. That will be told by Śrī Kṛṣṇa later on in the 12th chapter of this *Gītā* on *bhakti*. But, we should keep this in mind: the goal is this *samatva*, and this can be attained through all these various paths. But, in the *Gītā*, all these paths are blended together into one supreme spiritual path, which I call, 'a comprehensive spirituality of action and contemplation, *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti,* blended together'. As I have dealt with this more fully in the 'Introduction', this is the philosophy for the modern age which has been emphasized today by Sri Ramakrishna also, *that God can be seen not only with eyes closed in meditation, but also with eyes open at the time of work*. This is a profound idea in Advaita Vedanta. Sri Ramakrishna has specially stressed the importance of this comprehensive spirituality of the *Gītā* based on that Advaitic vision. Meditation is a difficult art; everybody, who has tried it, will admit that it is not easy. For years you go on meditating, still meditation will not come to you so soon. When the mind has been accustomed in a particular way, we cannot change it so easily; if by concentration and meditation we have to get this sameness of vision or *samabhāva*, it is difficult, for our minds are always restless. This doubt has been voiced by Arjuna in verses 33 and 34, which we shall take up for study now.

अर्जुन उवाच—

Arjuna uvāca —

'Arjuna said:'

योऽयं योगस्त्वया प्रोक्तः साम्येन मधुसूदन ।
एतस्याहं न पश्यामि चञ्चलत्वात् स्थितिं स्थिराम् ॥३३॥

Yo'yam yogastvayā proktaḥ sāmyena madhusūdana;
Etasyāham na paśyāmi cañcalatvātsthitim sthirām — 6. 33

'This *yoga* which has been taught by you, O slayer of Madhu, as characterised by the vision of equality, I do not see (the possibility of) its lasting endurance, owing to restlessness (of the mind).'

Arjuna said: 'The mind is very fickle; I do not get that stability, that steadiness, to have this wonderful vision'. *Yo ayam yogaḥ tvayā proktaḥ*, 'this *yoga* which you expounded just now', *dhyāna yoga; etasyāham na paśyāmi,* 'I am not able to understand', *cañcalatvāt*, 'because the mind is very, very fickle'; *sthitim sthirām,* 'its lasting endurance'. We cannot concentrate easily. Such stability, such steadiness, we cannot get.

Then, the next verse expounds the idea further:

चञ्चलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद्दृढम् ।
तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम् ॥३४॥

Cañcalam hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavat dṛḍham;
Tasyāham nigraham manye vāyoriva suduṣkaram — 6. 34

'Verily, the mind, O Kṛṣṇa, is restless, turbulent, strong, and unyielding; I regard it quite as hard to achieve its control, as that of the air.'

Arjuna is putting forth the doubt which everyone has. He says, 'verily, O Kṛṣṇa, the mind is very, very fickle'. *Cañcalam hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa; hi* in Sanskrit means 'it is well known'. Wherever you find the word *hi*, it means 'it is very well known'. *Pramāthi balavat dṛḍham*, 'it pulls me powerfully this way, that way'. That is the nature of this mind; *tasyāham nigraham manye suduṣkaram*, 'its control and discipline I consider to be difficult'; *vāyoriva,* 'like trying to catch the air'.

So, these two verses convey the problem of dealing with the mind in the most luminous way. And it is good for us to know that it is not easy; it is hard. We cannot finish everything in six months and get away. And so

Arjuna puts this question on our behalf, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives the answer, taking the subject to a wider dimension. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, therefore,

श्रीभगवान् उवाच—

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said:'

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥३५॥

Asamśayam mahābāho mano durnigraham calam;
Abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate — 6. 35

'Without doubt, O mighty-armed, the mind is restless and difficult to control; but through practice and renunciation, O son of Kuntī, it can be achieved.'

Bhagavān says, 'you are right, Arjuna, this mind is very difficult to control.' Śrī Kṛṣṇa accepts this description of the mind by Arjuna; he doesn't contradict it. He says how we can yet manage to control the mind. *Asamśayam mahābāho mano durnigraham calam; asamśayam,* 'you are right, without any doubt'; *mano durnigraham*, 'mind is difficult to control'; *calam*, 'it is constantly flickering'. When Arjuna said I find the mind difficult to control, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives the answer: *gṛhyate,* 'It can be controlled'. How? By two methods, *abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate,* through *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*, 'constant practice and a sense of detachment'.

In our daily life, not only in spiritual life, things which are impossible become possible when you do repeatedly the same thing. You get mastery over that thing. When you see somebody playing on the *tabla,* you think, 'O, it is impossible'. But, after six months of practice, you also get mastery over it. When I was a boy and saw people riding bicycles, I thought, 'how difficult it would be riding a cycle like this.' But when you try it for a few days, you also do it easily. So, it is a question of practice. *Abhyāsa* means practice. That is a very important word. And the next is *vairāgya*, a sense of detachment. Why does the mind run about? Because there are so many

things to attract the mind. We shall develop a little detachment. That will help us in dealing with the mind better. So, *abhyāsa*, and *vairāgya* are important. And the same idea is expressed by Patañjali in his *Yoga-Sūtras*, dealing with the same subject about controlling the mind: *abhyāsa-vairāgyābhyām tan-nirodhaḥ,* 'the *cittavṛtti,* the action of the mind, its fluctuating nature, can be controlled by *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*'. This confidence we must have. When you say that an achievement is impossible, then you will not be able to do that at all. You must first have the conviction that it is possible for you to achieve the goal, then only it becomes possible. What is impossible? Going to the moon was once thought to be impossible, but even that is possible today. So, there are many things, which we think impossible at one time; they become possible at another time. Therefore, don't say a thing is impossible. 'We shall do it, we shall do it'. This tremendous determination must be there.

This is expressed in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Kārikā* of Gauḍapāda in a famous verse (3. 41) which says that, while dealing with the mind, you must have a tremendous determination. What is the type of determination? 'Taking a piece of grass, you try to empty the ocean, drop by drop.' With that determination you must control the mind:

Utseka udadheryadvat kuśāgreṇaikabindunā;
Manaso nigrahastadvad bhaved aparikhedataḥ —

Without depression, we must consistently pursue this work of dealing with the mind, just like a bird which had decided to empty the ocean because the ocean had destroyed the eggs the bird had laid nearby. The bird came, held a piece of grass in its beak and started emptying the ocean, drop by drop. A strange sight, but this is what we need to do in our daily life; we must have that determination, 'I shall succeed. I shall do it.' Climbing atop Mount Everest was difficult earlier; today, nearly everybody does it, women also do it. So, I say that there is a capacity in the human mind for achieving control over the mind and realizing the truth of the Atman. We must have faith in that power of the mind that, in our mind, there are hidden possibilities. A child finds a thing difficult; a young man of twenty will find it easy. In this example, you can see that our judgement regarding possibility or impossibility of things is very relative. So, don't go to an

extreme assertion; though a thing is impossible, you can still say, 'at present it is impossible, but I shall do it, I shall do it.' That should be the attitude.

Consider an untrained tiger or lion in a circus party; on the first day a circus person goes to control it, he or she finds it impossible even to approach the animal. Such a terrible look and growling and roaring! And one gets frightened. But, we begin to train it slowly, and we succeed in training that terrible animal, till we can even just sit on its back. That is what we do. Just as with the wild animals around us, it is also the same with the wild mind. It can be trained; it can be made a servant of your purposes. Therefore, that faith must be there, 'I shall, I shall.' Let it take a number of years, even lives, but, we *shall* do it. Our concept of time is not confined merely to one physical existence. It is much wider, much vaster. What I fail to achieve now, I shall achieve later. But, I shall continue the struggle; I shall achieve something even in this birth. And I shall leave for the next birth to achieve the remaining. This vast canvas of time is given to all because one has got many things to achieve and one has many possible energies hidden within. And therefore, the scale of time which is given to us in Vedanta is so different from what is given to one in every other religion. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say later on, in this very chapter, about this wonderful time scale available to us for achieving things.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, *abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate*, 'the control of the mind can be done through *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya'*. *Vairāgya* is 'the spirit of renunciation of a mere sensate life'. *Abhyāsa* is 'practice'. A wonderful idea is given here. You see a piece of rock there. A drop of water is falling from the top of that rock; falling drop by drop. After some years you will find that that rock has become eroded by the falling of those little water droplets. I have seen a rock where a person used to make *sāṣṭāṅga namaskāra*, salutation with the forehead touching that rock. I watched it for some years, and gradually, that rock began to develop a dent in it; that is the nature of repetition. A very tender touch of the skin, or a tender drop of water can make a dent on a hard rock. What a wonderful idea! So, we can do wonders with this mind; we can control it, though it looks very unstable and uncontrollable just now. We shall have to make it strong and steady; that is the work we have to do in training the mind. This is the teaching that is given in this verse. All the great masters, who were produced in this

country, have worked with patience and continued the struggle. 'We will win, we will win,' that is the language. Defeatism has no place in human life. You may get defeated once, but try again, and you will win. It is something like what I had said earlier about the British in the Second World War. Britain lost many battles, but she won the war. So, it is the same thing in our daily life; in dealing with the mind, we shall lose many battles, but eventually the war will be won, control of the mind will be achieved. That should be our attitude with regard to dealing with our mind. It is extremely difficult; in fact, this is so in the *Dhyāna yoga* and *Jñāna yoga* paths. In *Bhakti yoga* context also the same idea comes; we find our mind to be very difficult to control and a devotee prays, 'O, Lord, please do something to control my mind.'

Now, there is one *śloka* which is a prayer on behalf of the devotees of the world, because devotees know that their very weak minds can only be controlled through God's grace. The prayer is composed by Ádi Śaṅkarācārya*,* an extraordinary person, on behalf of you and I. He has dealt with this subject in his famous book, *Śivānandalahari*; the *śloka* 20 says in its second part:

Kapālin bhikṣo me hṛdayakapim atyantacapalam;
Dṛḍham bhaktyā baddhvā śiva bhavadadhīnam kuru vibho —

What a beautiful sentence! O *kapālin*, 'O Śiva'; Śiva is called a *kapālin* because he takes a skull from the cremation ground and uses it as a vessel for begging and eating food. It is a sort of begging bowl; *bhikṣo*, so he is being addressed as *bhikṣu,* 'a beggar'; *me hṛdayakapim*, 'the monkey of my heart'; *atyanta capalam*, 'extremely fickle' is this monkey; it never sits quiet; its eyes are always moving. You can see this nature of the monkey. What should Śiva do to you? *Dṛḍham bhaktyā baddhvā*, 'bind the mind strongly with the cord of *bhakti*'; but then, don't leave the mind here and there; *bhavadadhīnam kuru vibho*, 'keep it under your control', then there will be no fear. That is the prayer of Śaṅkarācārya on behalf of every devotee in the world.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling us to have this positive attitude, 'I shall overcome, I shall overcome. How many difficult situations we have overcome; how many problems we have overcome! This also we shall

overcome.' That should be the faith that must inspire our heart: *śraddhā,* 'faith', *ātmaśraddhā*, 'faith in oneself', faith also in the Divine that is within yourself. 'What is impossible when the Divine awakes in me?' That should be our attitude. This is called *śraddhā*, *a totality of positive attitudes*. Negative attitudes should not be cultivated for long periods; for a short period it may be there. The general attitude must be, 'I shall, I shall, I can, I can.' That is called *śraddhā* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say later in the 3rd verse of the seventeenth chapter, that 'a person is as good as the *śraddhā* that he or she has within himself or herself', *śraddhāmayo'yam puruṣo yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ*. If you don't have *śraddhā,* you will be an absolutely good-for-nothing individual. Have that *śraddhā;* have that faith in yourself, have the faith that tremendous energies are hidden within you.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*. I have seen a boy in Rangoon, the son of a barrister. He was very weak and he had various evil habits like smoking, etc. So, when the barrister came to me one day and said, 'Such is the nature of the boy. He likes you, please give him some suggestion.' I said, 'Send him from Rangoon to Bangalore for physical culture training. There he should go and develop his body; the body has become very thin and weak; the mind is also weak; send him there.' And that had a miraculous effect. By the time the boy landed in Vizag from Rangoon, he gave up smoking by himself, without anybody telling him anything. Then he went to Bangalore, and developed his body; the change came, and he became, later on, a chartered accountant or some such thing.

This is how by a little effort, a new strength can come to us. We must be at it; that is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa is emphasizing this point. *Abhyāsa*—how many things we achieve through *abhyāsa!* People learn music: how difficult it is to play on a harmonium, or a vīṇa, or any such instrument! But, one achieves it all through practice. What is impossible at one moment becomes possible at another moment.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says,

असंयतात्मना योगो दुष्प्राप इति मे मतिः ।
वश्यात्मना तु यतता शक्योऽवाप्तुमुपायतः ॥३६॥

Asamyatātmanā yogo duṣprāpa iti me matiḥ;
Vaśyātmanā tu yatatā śakyo'vāptum upāyataḥ — 6. 36

'*Yoga* is hard to be attained by one of uncontrolled self; such is My conviction; but the self-controlled, striving by right means, can obtain it.'

Asamyatātmanā yogo duṣprāpa iti me matiḥ, 'for one who has no control of the self or mind, there is no possibility of *Yoga*'; *asamyatātmanā* means, 'one devoid of control of the self or mind'; *samyata* means 'disciplined or controlled'; *asamyata*, 'without that control', when the mind is wandering here and there; *duṣprāpa iti me matiḥ,* 'such a one cannot get any kind of *Yoga;* that is My opinion', so says Śrī Kṛṣṇa here. *Vaśyātmanā tu yatatā śakyo'vāptum upāyataḥ*, 'but those who have some measure of control over the mind can achieve real *yoga* by adopting proper means'. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *sakyaḥ avāptum,* 'he or she can obtain *yoga*'; *upāyataḥ*, 'through proper *upāya* or means'. If you employ proper methods, you will achieve finally a complete control over the mind.

Then Arjuna asks another question:

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca —

'Arjuna said:'

अयतिः श्रद्धयोपेतो योगाच्चलितमानसः ।
अप्राप्य योगसंसिद्धिं कां गतिं कृष्ण गच्छति ॥३७॥

Ayatiḥ śraddhayopeto yogāccalitamānasaḥ;
Aprāpya yogasamsiddhim kām gatim kṛṣṇa gacchati — 6. 37

'Though possessed of *śraddhā,* but unable to control oneself, with the mind moving away from *yoga*, what is the fate of one failing to gain perfection in *yoga*, O Kṛṣṇa?'

Consider a person who was struggling in the beginning; later on, he or she became a little amiss in the struggle, began to weaken his or her endeavour. Then such a one can be said to lose the *yoga* state. *Ayatiḥ,* 'unable to struggle'; *śraddhayopeto,* 'he or she has great *śraddhā:* "I must

do.”’; he or she has faith in oneself; *śraddhā* in *yoga* technique also is there, but, *yogāccalita mānasaḥ,* ‘the mind has fallen down from the path of *yoga’;* a little bit of carelessness came and the mind has fallen down from that temper of *yoga*. *Aprāpya yogasamsiddhim*, ‘not achieving the final goal of *yoga*’; *samsiddhi* means ‘perfection’ in *yoga*. *Kām gatim kṛṣṇa gacchati,* ‘what happens to that person?’ A person who is in this condition, he or she is on the deathbed and is to die. What will be his or her later state? The next *śloka* explains the question further:

कच्चिन्नोभयविभ्रष्टश्छिन्नाभ्रमिव नश्यति ।
अप्रतिष्ठो महाबाहो विमूढो ब्रह्मण: पथि ॥३८॥

Kaccinnobhaya vibhraṣṭaḥ chinnābhramiva naśyati;
Apratiṣṭho mahābāho vimūḍho brahmaṇaḥ pathi — 6. 38

‘Does such a person, fallen from both, and deluded in the path of Brahman, perish without support, like a rent cloud, O mighty-armed one?’

Kaccinnobhayavibhraṣṭaḥ, ‘one who has lost both’: worldly life and spiritual life; *ubhaya*, means ‘both’; *vibhraśṭaḥ*, ‘fallen down’ from both; *chinnābhram iva naśyati*, ‘is he destroyed, just like the scattered cloud’ by a strong wind; is the position of the seeker also of that nature? He or she has been practising *yoga*, had faith in it, but gave it up becoming amiss. Is such a one going to be destroyed just like the scattered cloud in the sky*? Apratiṣṭho*, ‘without getting established’ in the state of *yoga*; *vimūḍho brahmaṇaḥ pathi*, ‘becoming deluded in the path of Brahman’. His or her mind has fallen down from there. What will happen to such a person who has failed to pursue this *yoga* path up to the end? This is Arjuna’s question.

एतन्मे संशयं कृष्ण छेत्तुमर्हस्यशेषत: ।
त्वदन्य: संशयस्यास्य छेत्ता न ह्युपपद्यते ॥३९॥

Etanme samśayam kṛṣṇa chettumarhasyaśeṣataḥ;
Tvad anyaḥ samśayasya asya chettā na hyupapadyate—6. 39

‘This doubt of mine, O Kṛṣṇa, You should completely dispel; for it is not possible for any but You to dispel this doubt.’

Etanme samśayam kṛṣṇa, 'this doubt of mine, O Kṛṣṇa'; *chettum arhasi aśeṣataḥ*, 'you are capable of destroying this doubt completely'; *tvad anyaḥ,* 'other than you'; *samśayasya asya chettā,* 'remover of this doubt'; *na hi upapadyate*, 'I do not find'.

श्रीभगवान उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said:'

पार्थ नैवेह नामुत्र विनाशस्तस्य विद्यते ।
नहि कल्याणकृत्कश्चिद्दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति ॥४०॥

Pārtha naiveha nāmutra vināśaḥ tasya vidyate;
Nahi kalyāṇakṛt kaścit durgatim tāta gacchati — 6. 40

'Verily, O son of Pṛthā, there is no destruction for such a one, neither here nor hereafter, for, the doer of good, O my son, never comes to grief.'

The first thing that Śrī Kṛṣṇa does is to assure every person that if one has done good, he or she will never be destroyed. That is a great assurance coming from Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*, in more than one place. Arjuna, I assure you that *na hi kalyāṇakṛt kaścit durgatim tāta gacchati*. *Kalyāṇa* means, 'what is good, what is auspicious'. It is a beautiful word in Sanskrit. *Kalyāṇa, maṅgala, śubha,* all three mean the same thing according to *Amarakośa*. Whoever does what is *kalyāṇa*, or *maṅgala,* or *śubha*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *tāta durgatim na gacchati*, 'my dear child, such a one will never come to grief', never come to any bad situation; *durgatim* means 'a bad state of life'. That degradation will never come to such a person. This is a promise. What will happen to that person then? Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains it:

प्राप्य पुण्यकृतां लोकानुषित्वा शाश्वतीः समाः ।
शुचीनां श्रीमतां गेहे योगभ्रष्टोऽभिजायते ॥४१॥

Prāpya puṇyakṛtām lokān uṣitvā śāśvatīḥ samāḥ;
Śucīnām śrīmatām gehe yogabhraṣṭo'bhijāyate — 6. 41

'Having attained the worlds of the doers of meritorious deeds, and dwelling there for long years, one fallen from *yoga* reincarnates in the home

of the pure and the prosperous.'

Yogabhraṣṭaḥ, 'one who has fallen from the path of *yoga*', i.e. without completing the whole *yoga* process, because the mind became diverted due to carelessness; such a person will be born in the next life in a suitable environment to continue the unfinished task. That is the special teaching of the *Sanātana Dharma*. In no other religion will you find this idea, specially in the present day world religions. Earlier, primitive religions had this belief, but other religions hold that one has only one life, only the present particular physical manifestation, nothing else, neither before nor hereafter. But, in India all the great teachers of India's religions—Hindu, Buddhist, or Jain—have emphasized that this physical manifestation is only one such manifestation; many births have gone before this, many will come after this also. India's time and space scale is immense, like that of modern Western science. We are in search of something. If you can't get it in the present birth, you will get it in the next, or in a still later birth. You *will* get the opportunity. This is the concept of rebirth or reincarnation.

This coming and going will end when one realizes the infinite and immortal Brahman or Atman, the very source of the universe. Vedanta considers that realization as the one goal of human evolution. That knowledge of reincarnation came to us when we discovered that this human being has three personality levels. One is the gross personality of the human body, *sthūla śarīra*, within which there is a subtle personality of ideas, thoughts and impressions, etc. That is called *sūkṣma śarīra*, the subtle body, within which is the *kāraṇa śarīra*, the causal body, which is extremely subtle. So, one is gross, the other is subtle, and the last one is extremely subtle. At the time of death what happens is this: the gross body dies and is left behind; the subtle and causal bodies go away. It is compared to a snake leaving away its outer skin and getting a new skin. The gross has a limited frame of life. The time frame of each type of the body is different; for the gross, it is very limited, whereas the time frame for the subtle body is much vaster. Even now, much of our day-to-day life is conducted by that subtle body, through the physical gross body. It is only a continual expression of the subtle body through various gross bodies. Our conscious experiences are controlled by the unconscious and subconscious levels of the human mind. The subconscious and unconscious layers of the mind constitute the

sūkṣma śarīra, containing all our impressions of actions performed in previous and present lives. When the seers discovered the *sūkṣma śarīra*, then they got this new idea that physical death is not the end of human life; only this particular manifestation ends here, and you are to continue in another life. So, death is treated not as a full stop, but only as a comma, or a semicolon. Life continues further and further, though physically you cannot verify it. It can be verified only spiritually.

So, the sages investigated the science of human possibilities; they could go deep into the human mind, could discover this type of existence beyond the physical manifestation. So, what is done in this life is not destroyed. We continue our march later. Death is just a kind of sleep and we wake up later and continue the march. A pilgrim going to a place of pilgrimage takes a night halt at a particular place and sleeps; but, the next morning, the pilgrim continues his pilgrimage again. And human life is like this. This a profound truth of our religion which is attracting the attention of increasing numbers of Western people, including a few scientists, even though it cannot be verified. There is no physical verification. This sensory system cannot verify it, because no quantity can be made out of it. And yet the whole idea has some profound truth in it; many people feel it.

It is this subtle body or *sūkṣma śarīra* that is the equivalent of ‘soul’ in the English language, and that forms the subject of rebirth or reincarnation. That this truth had been widely held by an impressive cross-section of humanity in ancient and modern times is revealed to us by a recent book: *Reincarnation: An East-West Anthology,* compiled by Joseph Head and S.L. Cranston, and published by the Julian Press, Inc., New York. The announcement over the cover flap reads:

‘Reincarnation is frequently regarded as an oriental concept incompatible with Western thinking and traditional belief. The present encyclopaedic compilation of quotations from eminent philosophers, theologians, poets, scientists, etc., of every period of Western culture, and the thoroughly documented survey of Reincarnation Culture, and the thoroughly documented survey of Reincarnation in world religions, will serve to correct this error in thinking.

‘This anthology deals with a subject which many philosophers have called the central issue of our time—the question of man’s immortality.’

The announcement ends with the following comments of James Freeman Clarke:

‘It would be curious if we should find science and philosophy taking up again the old theory of metempsychosis, remodelling it to suit our present modes of religious and scientific thought, and launching it again on the wide ocean of human belief. But strange things have happened in the history of human opinion.’

In the Preface to the book, the compilers state:

‘Although a surprising number of distinguished thinkers of every period of history have either championed or on occasion favourably considered the idea of repeated existences upon earth, as this Anthology attests, such testimony hardly established reincarnation as a fact. It does suggest, however, that an idea that has occupied so many exceptional minds cannot be lightly dismissed, but is worthy of questioning, study, and investigation.’

We all live and one day we will die. Is everything over upon our death? That suspicion remains true. Every human mind has asked this question. *Astītyeke nāyamastīti caike*, as the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (I. i. 20) says, ‘some say there is, some others say there is not’. We may not see with these eyes, but something is there that transcends death. Based upon that truth of rebirth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, when that *yogabhraṣṭaḥ*, ‘one fallen from yoga’ dies, he or she has only lost the physical body, the *sthūla śarīra*, but the person with the *sūkṣma śarīra* continues and tries to get a new birth. All of his or her tendencies in this life will determine the type of birth that person will have in the next incarnation. *Yathā karma yathā śrutam,* ‘in accordance with their work and in conformity with their knowledge’, as the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (II. ii. 7) puts it. What kind of birth will one have? Śrī Kṛṣṇa has given here two types of birth as examples. What is that?

Prāpya puṇyakṛtām lokān, first of all, that person has done much good work here, much *puṇyam* he or she has done here, so that person will go ‘to subtle worlds of doers of meritorious deeds’, *puṇyakṛtām lokān*. But that heaven is not eternal. When the merit capital which took that person there is

exhausted, the person comes back to the human world, and is reborn; but, where? *Śucīnām śrīmatām gehe*, 'in a prosperous but pure family'; such a person will get birth there. He or she will be gravitating to that particular situation. After all, there is such a thing as affinity. This soul has affinity with that situation, with that environment. Therefore, he or she finds it possible to be born there. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says *śāśvatīḥ samāḥ*, 'having lived long in that heavenly enjoyment', when the *puṇyam* capital is exhausted, one may be born in a pure and prosperous family, *śucīnām śrīmatām gehe yogabhraṣṭo'bhijāyate*. And what happens thereafter? After one is born there, within a short time, the whole *samskāras* of the past come to influence that person. He or she starts the life's journey once again, where he or she had left off. Nothing of what you have done is lost.

Tatra tam buddhisamyogam labhate paurvadehikam, 'there he or she becomes associated with the entire totality of thoughts and aspirations that he or she had in the past life'. The fall that one had is overlooked and all these noble thoughts and aspirations come to him or her through various impulses from within. Then the seeker in the new birth says to oneself, 'now let me begin once again and continue the journey.' He or she may not remember all that was done in the past, but the subconscious mind takes the seeker in the right direction. *The only valid objection to the teaching of rebirth is that no one has any memory of last birth*. Vedanta says that this objection is not valid. *Memory cannot be the test of existence*. None has the memory of one's early childhood experiences.

This is just like what we see in our life today. What makes us choose a particular profession? Everybody born in the same family, with the same genetic constitution, does not live his or her life in the same way. Each child in the family chooses a particular profession: music, sport, science, or mountain-climbing, each according to his or her interest. *Where is this interest obtained from*? Not from this life; not from the genetic constitution which is common to all of them. In this life there has been no experience yet. So, *that impulse must be coming from the past*. Such a person will say, 'I don't know what it is, but it is impelling me. I must go for this, I must go for that.' You argue with that person, that boy or girl saying, 'No, don't do it. Go in for something else;' you may try your best, but no, he or she will come back to this and say firmly, '*this* is my choice, *this* is my choice.' This

determination in a new life is based on all that one did in a past life. It gives you a particular impulse, a particular direction. First type of birth is *śucīnām śrīmatām gehe;* the second type of birth is in a *yogī's* own house as pointed out in the next *śloka,* 42.

अथवा योगिनामेव कुले भवति धीमताम् ।
एतद्धि दुर्लभतरं लोके जन्म यदीदृशम् ॥४२॥

Athavā yoginām eva kule bhavati dhīmatām;
Etaddhi durlabhataram loke janma yadīdṛśam — 6. 42

'Or else one may be born into a family of wise *yogīs* only; verily, a birth such as that is very rare to obtain in this world.'

A very wise *yogī's* family, may not be a well-to-do one, but its members are fine, nice people, who practise *yoga;* there one may get one's next birth; that will stimulate the person all the more to strive for spiritual illumination. You can see it in India today in another context. Number of people apply for central services, particularly IAS and IPS. The largest number is from Delhi, because the whole atmosphere of the family there is governed by various types of services. So, the whole atmosphere gives a stimulus to a new-born child. In the beginning, Delhi dominated all these central services. Slowly, it is now spreading to the interior areas also. Because everywhere new *samskāras* are developing through social contact, people are coming to apply for central services today from far away places, even small towns, even villages. There is such a thing as a stimulus given to you by the atmosphere of the family, or society. This is easy to recognize. In the case of *yoga*, it is just the same. In a holy family, one will have the tendency to pursue what holy deeds one had done earlier; one may not know the why of it, but it is something that pulls him or her in that direction. One cannot say no to it, nobody can say no to it; that is the idea.

Etat hi durlabhataram, 'this is extremely difficult'; to get this option is not so easy. *Loke janma yadīdṛśam*, 'this kind of birth in the world' is rather very rare; only some cases are there of this nature. So, you are already in an atmosphere of *yoga*; there is already the impulse of *yoga* within you. These

two, the family *yoga* atmosphere and the candidate's impulse of *yoga,* conspire to start one to continue the journey on the path of *yoga*.

Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

तत्र तं बुद्धिसंयोगं लभते पौर्वदेहिकम् ।
यतते च ततो भूय: संसिद्धौ कुरुनन्दन ॥४३॥

Tatra tam buddhisamyogam labhate paurvadehikam;
Yatate ca tato bhūyaḥ samsiddhau kurunandana — 6. 43

'There, one is united with the intelligence acquired in the former body, and strives more than before, for perfection, O son of the Kurus.'

Tatra tam buddhisamyogam labhate paurvadehikam; tatra, 'there', by the time the child is four to eight years old, a certain impulse coming from the past birth, already working in its *sūkṣma śarīra* or subtle body, impels one to choose the spiritual path, the *yoga* path. He or she had left it off in a previous life; now, he or she will continue the journey towards spiritual perfection. *Paurvadehikam*, 'pertaining to the *pūrvadeha'* or 'the previous body' in which he or she had developed this *yoga* practice; *buddhi samyogam labhate,* 'that *buddhi* comes to him or her in a very forceful way', when he or she starts choosing a life career. And that *buddhi* will finally express in his or her mind thus: 'this is the career I will take up, this is what, this is where I left off in my earlier life.' *Yatate ca tato bhūyaḥ*, 'such a one continues spiritual practice again in that new life'; *yatna* means 'struggle, effort'; he or she continues the earlier effort; *samsiddhau*, 'to achieve *siddhi* or perfection in spiritual life'; *kurunandana*, 'child of the *Kurus,* i.e. Arjuna'.

This is the way one continues to struggle for what one aspires to be in one's present life, which could not be completed in an earlier life. In the next life the same impulse takes you to continue that struggle. That *buddhi,* that you had before, begins to influence you now. *Buddhi* doesn't die when the body dies. *Manas* and *buddhi*, both continue with all the impressions of life; all the *karmas* that we have done in previous life, its fruits, etc., are all there. So, that *buddhi* begins to assert in the new life. There is no other explanation why one child should choose to become a musician from the

very beginning, while another child goes to the army, and another child goes for this or that. Born in the same family, genetically there is no difference at all, but why this difference in choosing? No genetics, by itself, can explain it.

Our people said, here is the truth: A human being is not merely the physical body, and therefore death doesn't mean the end of the human struggle. He or she has a subtle body. That body survives the death of the physical body, and that body, the *sūkṣma śarīra,* manufactures a new body for itself, suitable to its own purpose. This is the teaching given by all the teachers of various religions that had their birth in India. This truth cannot be arrived at by those who believe that the human being is only the physical body.

पूर्वाभ्यासेन तेनैव ह्रियते ह्यवशोऽपि सः ।
जिज्ञासुरपि योगस्य शब्दब्रह्मातिवर्तते ॥४४॥

Pūrvābhyāsena tenaiva hriyate hyavaśo'pi saḥ;
Jijñāsurapi yogasya śabdabrahma ativartate — 6. 44

'By that previous practice alone, one is borne on in spite of oneself. Even the enquirer after *yoga* rises superior to the performer of Vedic rituals.'

Pūrvābhyāsa, 'the previous *abhyāsa* or practices that one had'; *hriyate hyavaśo'pi saḥ,* 'pulls one into the line of spiritual practice in spite of oneself'. You may not particularly very much choose it, but your inner impulses take you in that direction. Then a beautiful truth Śrī Kṛṣṇa conveys here: *jijñāsurapi yogasya śabdabrahma ativartate; śabdabrahma* means 'the Vedas', its ritualistic portions, the dos and don'ts about religion. Literally, it means Brahman, the Ultimate Reality, as *śabda* or sound; *śabda* means the Vedas. In the *Koran*, in the *Bible*, everywhere you will find that aspect of religion, the dos and don'ts of religion. The Vedas themselves say in its philosophical part that one transcends these dos and don'ts when one begins to experiment with religion. Till experimenting you are subject to the dos and don'ts, but once you start experimenting and experiencing, you go beyond the dos and don'ts of any religion. So, you transcend the

śabdabrahma; who transcends? *Jijñāsurapi yogasya*, 'the very enquirer or investigator or experimenter with *yoga*'. When you begin to undertake *yoga* spiritual exercises, you don't need the help of these dos and don'ts at all. You are an experimenter, and *that* is real religion. Dos and don'ts are only very elementary; a child up to the age of five or six must abide by the 'do this and do not do that' of the parents, but afterwards one's own judgement comes to determine what is proper to do. One can then say, 'Yes, I like this, I like that', etc.

So, in spiritual life too, it is just the same. In the very elementary state of religion, you follow dos and don'ts. That is what you get in the Hindu *Smṛtis* and in the Islamic *Shariyat*, and in other various scriptures: do this, don't do this; we follow these injunctions, but it is not meant to be continued for long. You must transcend these and begin to experiment with the real subject of religion. We don't need these dos and don'ts at that time. That, Śrī Kṛṣṇa emphasizes in this great statement.

Jijñāsurapi yogasya śabdabrahma ativartate, 'even the inquirer into the nature of *yoga* goes beyond the jurisdiction of *śabdabrahma* or the Veda'; the *vidhi*, 'dos' and *niṣedha*, 'don't dos' of religion; 'I should do this, I should not do this'; you go beyond all this because you have become an experimenter. You are *in search* of truth. What a beautiful idea! To be limited by the Vedic injunctions is only like the limited application of dos and don'ts as when you were a child. When you are grown up, you think and act for yourself by yourself. Then you are going to enter into the field of search; you don't need these dos and don'ts any more. Before you start the journey, you consult the map. After consulting the map, you fold it, put it aside, and *start* the journey. According to the direction of the map, you go on to reach the goal yourself; you don't constantly keep looking at the map all throughout the journey. That is why this, the injunction, is secondary; and that, the quest, is primary; experience is primary, consulting books is secondary. *Consult with a view to experiment and experience*. That is a beautiful expression. In the *Sanātana Dharma* of India alone will you find this open admission that dos and don'ts of religions do not affect a person who has started experimenting with religion. When you live a spiritual life and start the struggle, you come to the science of religion. The other is the ethnical aspect of religion. 'I belong to the Hindu religion, so I have to do

certain things; I belong to the Muslim religion, so I have to do certain things or avoid doing certain other things', etc. *But once you enter into the practice of religion, you come to the science of religion*. You will also discover the unity of all religions once you begin the actual practice. For instance, take all the mystics of religions—the Sufi, the Christian, the Hindu—you will find a lot of similarity, a lot of unity.

These are the universal truths experienced by the world's mystics of any and every religion. So, that is where pure religion begins: religion as a search, religion as a science. Science depends upon seeking. I am quoting Eddington, the famous mathematician-astronomer of England. He says, 'You cannot understand the spirit of true science or true religion without keeping seeking in the forefront.' Keep the idea of searching in front of you; then you are a scientist, then you are a spiritual person. Nobody is born a physicist; nobody is born an astronomer. One seeks astronomy, one seeks physics, therefore, one becomes a scientist or a physicist. In religion, we are born in a particular religion, in a particular set of dos and don'ts and we remain there. If you want to be a scientist in religion, you must begin to ask and seek; then you will become a scientist in religion. As physical science is universal—there is no American science or Indian science or Arabic science—so also is religion when approached as a science. *This is one great understanding upheld openly by Vedanta or Sanātana Dharma, which people must grasp today*. Permanent peace and harmony between religions will come when we understand this true dimension of religion. The first is only the beginning, but it must lead you to the second. Then only it will be a *science* of religion. And when there is a science of religion you are in search of truth, you are not in search of a dogma or creed. They have no value for you. 'Is this true?', you ask, and go to the truth of it; you continue your march, go ahead, and try to realize it for yourself. In this way, the whole of *Sanātana Dharma* is centred in this scientific understanding of religion. Have you realized the truth? What is the use of merely believing? Believing has no final status here.

Śaṅkarācārya speaks in his commentaries very often, 'any fool can say "I know, I know." Show what you know. Have you realized something? Let us see what you have realized.' That kind of testing and verification is needed. So many passages you will find in the spiritual literature of India,

where this emphasis on *anubhava*, 'experience', is there. Belief has no high status in India. A man or woman may be exceptionally fine in character, though he or she may not have any beliefs at all, and yet we respect that person, for he or she is not merely a believer; a believer has no particular status.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving the essence of a profound idea which is found only in the *Sanātana Dharma*. In every other religion, if you try to experiment, if you try to experience something outside the accepted dogma, you may be killed even. You may not go beyond orthodoxy, those particular dos and don'ts. You may never get beyond it all your life. How many great mystics have been killed for trying to go beyond dogmas. How many have been controlled by religious authorities in Christianity and Islam. In Islam there were many great mystics who had realized very high truths, and yet they had to face death.

So, this concept of going beyond the letter of the law, trying to get the spirit of religion, was emphasized by Jesus Christ also. Jesus also says, you must seek if you want true religion, 'ask and it shall be given, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.' There you get the science of religion. But this was never popularized by the Christian Church throughout all these 1800 years. Today, we understand religion from the Indian point of view that it is a science of human growth and development, a science of human possibilities; that the Divine possibilities hidden within each one can be realized even in this very life. Nature has given the human being the organic capacity to do so. Therefore, today, more and more people are understanding religion from that point of view, as a science of human growth, development, and fulfilment, as a science of unfolding the infinite possibilities in every human being. When you do so, these dos and don'ts cease to have that appeal to you; they cease to exert control over you. That is what is expressed here in a brief sentence, *jijñāsurapi yogasya śabdabrahma ativartate,* 'even a *jijñāsu* of *yoga*, an inquirer into spiritual truths, goes beyond the control of all *śabdabrahma*, all Vedas, all scriptures.' That is a wonderful truth. This subject is continued in the remaining few verses; all these verses are on the subject of *yoga*, on how one continues *yoga* practice life after life until, in the final life, one is spiritually ripe enough to achieve the highest realization. But, behind this

final realization, there may be many failures that we don't mark, but they are there. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to tell us; failures will ultimately lead one to success, if one persists; that is the idea.

This idea is very strongly upheld only in the Hindu tradition; not in the Christian, not in the Islamic. There the dos and don'ts are very very powerful. You cannot easily transcend them, and if you transcend them, you might be punished also, even with death. But, in the *Sanātana Dharma* tradition, when you transcend this and begin to *live* religion, *then* you are very much appreciated, because that is the soul of religion, because, in *Sanātana Dharma,* 'experience', *anubhava* is the test of religion, not belief. In all other religions, belief is very very central. But, in India it is different. That is why we don't harm even unbelievers, we don't burn or torture them. That is all due to this one single truth that is emphasized, '*religion is realization and not belief*'. And when you start experimenting with religion, with a view to realizing its truth, you go beyond all these little dos and don'ts.

The *sandhyā vandanā* that we have in our tradition, with *mantras* and all that, is a very formal ritual. The thing is, you don't get anything by the performance of *sandhyā vandanā*. But, if you don't do it, you get into trouble! *Akaraṇe pratyavāya doṣaḥ,* 'if you don't do it, you do a wrong'. That is the nature of this kind of ritual. And Sri Ramakrishna says '*Sandhyā* merges in *Gāyatrī'. Gāyatrī* is much higher spiritually than this ritual of *sandhyā*. So, when you find spiritual stimulus has come to you, you need not do the *sandhyā* at all; you can straightaway start with *Gāyatrī* meditation. *Gāyatrī* merges in *Om*, that Supreme Divine word, which is the symbol of the Absolute Reality. In this way, there is such a thing as progress in spiritual life. We do not remain static; we do not remain at that elementary stage, at the infant level, even at the age of eighty. This concept is very strong in the Indian spiritual tradition. Wherever that emphasis is there, you have the science of religion: religion taking you to the experience of some profound spiritual truth. And the *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads are interested, not in confining people to these little dos and don'ts, but to give them a taste of the Reality hidden within each of them. You *must* realize this truth. Again and again this is emphasized in the Upaniṣads, in the *Gītā,* and in other great books of the Hindu tradition. In the Sufi tradition there is this

emphasis, ‘I am going beyond the rituals and the dos and don’ts of religion’; so also in Christian mystical tradition. But every time they have to watch for the reaction of the powerful orthodoxy. If you go a little more, orthodoxy will come upon you; the Church will come upon you. That is why they have to tread very carefully in the inner life. The finest spirits have been killed by orthodoxy in all these religions.

That is the speciality of the Indian tradition, that we don’t kill people who take to religion seriously. We are happy that one has taken to religion seriously. Religion is not a matter for talk for humanity; humanity has to *live* it, has to *realize* it; it is this central idea of spiritual experimentation; it is those who have realized spirituality that have kept India strong and steady. That is the soul of religion. Other aspects of religion are sometimes to be ignored as we are doing today. How many dos and don’ts of religion, people in every religion, are ignoring everyday today! So many things which are prescribed by religion, they don’t do. That doesn’t make for loss to the Hindu religion, because it consists in a struggle to realize the truth hidden in one’s own experience. Everybody can do it.

So, this is the importance of this statement in verse 44, where Śrī Kṛṣṇa says*, pūrvābhyāsena tenaiva hriyate hyavaśo’pi saḥ*. A yogī, if he or she falls down from that *yoga*-practice before attaining the end of *yoga* and later dies, in the next birth he or she starts from where one left off and continues the spiritual journey; and ‘he or she is impelled by all those old spiritual *samskāras;* without knowing it, one is impelled to take to spiritual practice, and one soon becomes an experimenter in that new life and in that state becomes a *jijñāsu*, a questioner, a seeker.’

When Sri Ramakrishna started as a *pūjari* or a priest in the Kālī temple at Dakshineswar, he soon became a *jijñāsu* there. ‘What am I doing? Worshipping a stone image? Is it true? Is it correct? Is there a Divine in this stone or in this Universe?’ This kind of questioning you will find from the very beginning. That is the nature of the spiritual growth of men and women. Otherwise, we take it for granted. Every priest doesn’t question all these daily acts. Whatever he has to do, he keeps on doing them like a machine. And if he gets his money, that is enough for him! But here it is quite different. Sri Ramakrishna started questioning, ‘Are you true, O

Mother? Or, are you a mere poetry, a mere imagination of people, a mere myth or legend?' All these questions came to his mind and out of this questioning came in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, that tremendous development of pure spirituality through various paths.

In the next *śloka,* verse 45, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

प्रयत्नाद्यतमानस्तु योगी संशुद्धकिल्बिषः ।
अनेकजन्मसंसिद्धस्ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥४५॥

Prayatnādyatamānastu yogī samśuddhakilbiṣaḥ;
Anekajanma samsiddhaḥ tato yāti parām gatim — 6. 45

'The *yogī*, striving assiduously, purified of taint, gradually gaining perfection through many births, then reaches the highest goal.'

Prayatnād yatamānastu, 'when the *yogī* struggles with tremendous effort'; *yogī samśuddhakilbiṣaḥ*, 'in the course of that struggle, one is shedding one's sins, impurities, and other things of the mind'; *samśuddha kilbiṣaḥ* means 'one who has purified whatever is evil in oneself'. Thus, one goes on building up one's spiritual awareness step by step, in a series of births. Some part you do in one birth, then, continue it in the next birth, and so on. It is a long journey; it can't be finished just in a short time. So, *aneka janma samsiddhaḥ*, 'becoming perfected through many births'. *Tato yāti parām gatim*, 'then, in the last birth one achieves spiritual realization'. It can be done in one birth provided the spiritual assets are available. Otherwise, you have to build up these spiritual assets; and asset-building means living a good life based on ethics and morality, and trying to love God and to advance towards Him. A dynamic spiritual life is needed; not leading merely a stagnant life. In that way you start advancing. Even then, by the time you come to the end of your life, you may not have achieved much. Then, when you die with the thought of the divine, in the next life you continue your spiritual march.

Nārada, one of the greatest saints in the *Sanātana Dharma* tradition, devoted himself to spiritual life in his earlier birth, even from his mother's womb. He got spiritual instructions from the discussions of sages who came to his house; his mother was only a maidservant at that time. After his

mother's death he struggled. He tells his own story in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam:* Then he heard a voice, saying, 'Nārada, you cannot achieve the highest in *this* life. There are still some weaknesses which have to be shed from you.' And, in his next life, we get a perfect Nārada, who becomes the great singer-messenger of God. Nārada's is a wonderful story we get in many of our *Purāṇas*.

Prayatnāt yatamānastu yogī samśuddha kilbiṣaḥ, 'through tremendous effort, the *yogī* becomes freed from all evil'; *aneka janma samsiddhaḥ*, 'having built up purity and spirituality life after life'; in the final life, *tato yāti parām gatim*, 'he or she achieves the supreme state' of perfection in spirituality. It is a very beautiful, elevating, encouraging truth for all of us.

In the next verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives a comparison between various types of spiritual practitioners:

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोऽधिकः ।
कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥४६॥

Tapasvibhyo'dhiko yogī jñānibhyo'pi mato'dhikaḥ;
Karmibhyaścādhiko yogī tasmādyogī bhavārjuna — 6. 43

'The *yogī* is regarded as superior to those who practise asceticism, and also to those who have obtained knowledge (through the scriptures); the *yogī* is also superior to the performers of action (enjoined in the scriptures). Therefore, be you a *yogī*, O Arjuna.'

The best of *yogīs* is expounded here in the *Bhagavad-Gītā.* From the second chapter onwards, to present the highest *yogī* ideal, we have various thoughts and inspiration, including the great technique of meditation given in this chapter. We have Patañjali's idea of training the mind, making it calm and steady, all that is included in the *yoga* or practical spirituality of the Gītā; *Karma*, *Jñāna*, *Bhakti* and this *Dhyāna,* all these are included in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's teaching of *yoga*. That is the *Gītā's* idea of *yoga*. This *yoga* is very comprehensive; I call it 'a comprehensive spirituality'. During work, during leisure, during human relations, and during meditation, such persons are in that world of *yoga*. 'You are a *yogī*'; that is a beautiful idea to tell a housewife. People will be wondering, 'how can *she, a housewife,* be a *yogī*?

A *yogī* is a specialized kind of human being, sitting somewhere in the Himalayas. No. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'you *are* a *yogī*'; whatever one may be doing, Śrī Kṛṣṇa whispers into the ear of all working people: 'You are a *yogī*. You are all to be *yogīs*'. That is the nature of this comprehensive spirituality of the *Gītā.*

So, in this verse Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

Tapasvibhyo'dhiko yogī, *'yogī* is superior to a *tapasvī*', one who practises austerities. Austerities are not of so much value. You can say, suppose I fast for five days; the only advantage you get out of it is that you can control your sensory appetites. That is one great gain. You get nothing else out of it. That is why a *tapasvī* is doing something good. But this *yogī* is superior to that. *Jñānibhyo'pi mato'dhikaḥ*, 'a *jñāni* who has studied all about philosophy and religion, what is God, what is soul; he knows everything *theoretically*, that *jñāni* also is inferior to this *yogī*'. You have known God, you have known the soul, but you have not experienced it and become one with it. That kind of *jñāni* is inferior to this *yogī*. And then, *karmibhyaścādhiko yogī*, 'those who do *karma* with attachment, with all the love-and-hate relationships, or *karma* involving rituals and ceremonies, that *karmi* is also inferior to this *yogī*'. Then, finally, comes a wonderful exhortation in the last part of verse 46: *Tasmād*, 'therefore'*; yogī bhavārjuna*, 'be a *yogī*, O Arjuna'.

If you ask what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to advise you, I will say this: He is whispering in your ear, and in everybody's ear, 'Be a *yogī*, be a *yogī;* that is your birthright. You are realizing what is already there, merely hidden within you. Spirituality is your birthright. Try to realize your birthright.' That is the message Śrī Kṛṣṇa conveys to every person.

There is no person who cannot become a *yogī,* as taught in the *Gītā*. Many people cannot perform various types of asceticism. But there is no need for it also. It is all mere waste of energy. Buddha discovered, after six years of ascetic life, that he had become thin, he had become lean, he had become weak. When he touched the belly, he said in his discourse, 'I could touch my backbone.' Such was the nature of his body due to leading an ascetic life. And when he tried to get up, he fell down. Then he sat and asked this question, 'What is this ascetic life? Where does it lead me to?

Absolutely nothing. This body has to achieve the highest illumination, but I am weakening it all the time.' And so he said, 'Asceticism of this type is vulgar. Similarly, those who get merged in sensory life they also are vulgar. I shall follow the middle path.' What a beautiful expression—*madhyama pratipāda,* 'the middle path', which we saw already at the very beginning of the sixth chapter. 'Don't eat too much, don't starve too much, don't work too much, don't rest too much.' All these are told there. Those who take to the middle path, they achieve *yoga*.

I like this beautiful exhortation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. To every child, in the ear you can tell, 'Be a *yogī*, be a *yogī*', as taught in the *Gītā*. You do good work, help people, serve people, bring happiness and cheer to one and all, develop peace of mind and strong detachment; all this is part of *yoga;* you will be leading a full life, as we call it. As Sri Ramakrishna enjoins, 'See God with eyes open at the time of work, and with eyes closed at the time of meditation'. That is the nature of this *yoga*. That is why you can bring in work as an important element of *yoga*. Usually, work is not considered an element of *yoga*. Work is just something that drags the mind to the external *samsāra* or worldliness. You are doing some work at home; you think it is *samsāra*. No, it is *not samsāra;* it is *yoga*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling us in the *Gītā*, 'Every work is sacred, every work is holy. By itself work is neither good nor bad, but the attitude of the mind makes it good or bad.' In this way, work has been given a very high status in the *Gītā*, and *yoga* in the *Gītā* is based upon men and women at work, men and women who have to discharge their responsibilities in life, in the midst of which one can become spiritual, one can realize truth. That is the exhortation here to everyone—politicians, administrators, school teachers, professors and professionals, housewives, and to everyone else. If only we understand the *Gītā* correctly, we will be hearing a constant whisper that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is putting into the ears of people, every minute, *tasmāt yogī bhava,* 'therefore, be a *yogī*, be a *yogī*.' Slowly, steadily, advance; there is no need to perform quick march in this matter; you can walk at your own convenient pace. But it is a long road. Take one step. Be thankful that you have gained that one step; then take the second step; and, in this way, march forward according to your own strength.

So, this is a very practical philosophy. And when you adopt it, there is no need for any regrets such as: 'I have not gone fast enough.' You will go ahead according to your strength. To someone who is faster, you say, 'God speed, go ahead, I shall come behind you.' That attitude must be there. No jealousy, no pulling somebody down; say, 'You go faster. I will come behind you. I have got my own pace.' What a beautiful idea! High character comes out of this attitude. That is what we need very badly today.

In one of the speeches of Swami Vivekananda in London, the subject was Practical Vedanta; high character, most generous attitudes, all these are discussed in that context. Swamiji gave an illustration:

In the English newspapers of that day, a picture had appeared. The British Navy and the American Navy were having a joint manoeuvre in South Pacific. Suddenly, a storm came and the British Navy ship was shaking and slowly sinking. So, all the captains and all the other naval cadets, stood on the deck saluting the flag. In front, there was the American Navy ship going unaffected by this storm. 'And then', says Swamiji, 'these British Navy people, standing and saluting the flag, appreciated that American Navy people had escaped trouble and shouted to them, "go ahead, go ahead; all cheer, all cheer; we are happy that you have gone beyond this without trouble; we don't mind our ill fate." And they went down the ocean.'

As they were sinking, this was the attitude they took; high character is there behind it. We can see our weakness in this matter. If anybody escapes something bad, and we are in the middle of trouble, we will curse that fellow who has escaped. We don't have that high attitude. Also, when good has come to me, I go ahead without thinking of others. Why? Our minds are not big, character is not high; there is no *yoga* at all. In that event given above, there is a *yoga* attitude. Swamiji appreciated this very much. We need it very badly in our own country; we need this attitude, 'go ahead, go ahead. I will come behind you according to my own pace.' So this is the teaching, *tasmāt yogī bhavārjuna*, 'therefore, be a *yogī*, Arjuna.'

Then, Śrī Kṛṣṇa sings a new note on the subject of *yoga* which will become the main theme in the next several chapters. That note is *bhakti*. We were dealing with *karma*, we were dealing with education, we were dealing

with meditation, so many things we have dealt with. At the end of the fifth chapter, there was just a gentle note of *bhakti* where verse 29 said:

Bhoktāram yajñatapasām sarvalokamaheśvaram;
Suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām jñātvā mām śāntimṛcchati —

A beautiful verse! Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling us here about the Incarnation of the Divine as the friend of all. He says, *suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām,* 'those who know Me as the friend of all beings'. He accepts whatever you offer as worship to any god or to any deity; all these offerings ultimately go to Him; *bhoktāram yajñatapasām*, 'ultimately all these *yajña* and *tapas* reach Me, the universal Lord'; *sarvalokamaheśvaram*, 'the Supreme Lord of the Universe'. And then, *suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām*, 'the friend of all beings'; that is the language Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses there; *jñātvā mām*, 'knowing Me as such'*; śāntim ṛcchati,* 'they attain peace of mind'. Real peace will come in God, in the one indwelling Divine in all. That note Śrī Kṛṣṇa had struck at the end of the fifth chapter.

Now, in this last verse of the sixth chapter, a similar note of *bhakti* is being struck, so that the whole subject of *yoga* becomes richer and richer with new and newer ideas, newer inspiration, just as the Ganga becomes richer when other rivers join it as tributaries. So also is the state of *yoga*. It begins as a very elementary treatment of a philosophical theme; then every succeeding chapter adds a new meaning, a new strength, to that presentation. Here, in the last *śloka* of the sixth chapter, the new element that is introduced in *yoga* is *bhakti*, love of Personal God. When you work, if there is real love of God, that work becomes really a joyous experience. Therefore, you have first to put in that new element into the *yoga* of the *Gītā*.

योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना ।
श्रद्धावान् भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मत: ॥४७॥

Yoginmāmapi sarveṣām madgatenāntarātmanā;
Śraddhāvānbhajate yo mām sa me yuktatamo mataḥ—6. 47

'And of all *yogīs,* one who, with the innermost self merged in Me, with *śraddhā*, devotes himself or herself to Me, is considered by Me as the most

steadfast.'

*Yoginām*api *sarveṣām*, 'among all the *yogīs*'*; madgatenāntarātmanā,* 'whose inner self has been drawn towards Me, as the eternal Self of all, incarnate as Śrī Kṛṣṇa'; *śraddhāvān*, 'one endowed with faith and conviction'; *bhajate yo mām*, 'who worships Me'*; sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*, 'he or she is the supreme *yogī*, according to Me'. *Tamaḥ*, in Sanskrit, refers to the superlative; *taraḥ* and *tamaḥ*; *taraḥ* refers to the comparative; and if a thing is still better, we say, *tamaḥ;* it means superlative, the best. That is why *tāratamya* is the word for comparison in Sanskrit. *Sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*, 'among *yogīs*, he or she is *yuktatamaḥ,* the supreme *yogī*'. When *bhakti* enters into *dhyāna, jñāna*, *karma* and human relations, this *bhakti* becomes the base. So, a new element is entering into the exposition of the *yoga* of the *Gītā* from this verse onwards. And this is the last verse of the sixth chapter.

इति ध्यानयोगो नाम षष्ठोऽध्यायः।

Iti dhyāna-yogo nāma ṣaṣṭho'dhyāyaḥ —

'Thus ends the sixth chapter, designated The Yoga of Meditation.'

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 7

Jñāna-Vijñāna Yoga
The Way of Knowledge with Realization

We now enter the seventh chapter. In this, you will find *bhakti*, or love of the Personal aspect of the Impersonal-Personal God, coming in a big way; and in chapters 8 to 12, it is all *bhakti* , strengthening this path of *yoga*, and enriching it in every sense of the term.

We have many aspects in our personality. Every aspect of personality is nourished by the comprehensive spirituality of the *Gītā*; otherwise, if there be only one side of spirituality, consequently, only some aspect of our personality will be developed, and the other aspects neglected. That should not be. Be all-sided by developing all aspects of your personality. And emotion is an important aspect. *Bhakti* is based on emotion and it concerns with handling that emotion intelligently and in a right way with the help of *jñāna*. That is why this is a great contribution to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's philosophy of *yoga*, which has been expounded from the second chapter onwards.

The seventh chapter begins with,

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said:'

मय्यासक्तमना: पार्थ योगं युञ्जन्मदाश्रय: ।
असंशयं समग्रं मां यथा ज्ञास्यसि तच्छृणु ॥१॥

Mayyāsaktamanāḥ pārtha yogam yuñjan madāśrayaḥ;
asamśayam samagram mām yathā jñāsyasi tacchṛṇu — 7. 1

'With the mind intent on Me, O son of Pṛthā, taking refuge in Me, and practising *yoga*, how you shall without doubt know Me fully, that you hear

from Me.'

Here is a very beautiful expression. *Mayyāsakta manāḥ pārtha*, 'with the mind intent on Me, O Arjuna'; *yogam yuñjan* , 'practising *yoga'; mad āśrayaḥ* , 'always depending upon Me', the one Infinite Self in the heart of all beings, who has become incarnate as Śrī Kṛṣṇa; that is His true dimension. *Asamśayam samagram mām yathā jñāsyasi*, 'how you will, beyond all doubt, understand Me in My fullness'; *tat sṛṇu*, 'that listen from Me', learn that from Me; *samagram*, know Reality in Its 'total aspect', and not in a segmental way.

Many people in religion are fanatic and intolerant. Why? Because they see Truth only in a piecemeal fashion, and they hold on to it thinking that everything else is wrong. And they come to fight and quarrel. Because India had a comprehension of the fullness of the Reality, India became the land of toleration, the land of this understanding that you can approach that Reality through various ways—not that what you have got alone is true. What, as they say in English, 'My doxy is orthodoxy, your doxy is heterodoxy; so, you must be punished.' That is the language. But here it is not so. We respect everybody's belief, everybody's spiritual path; we welcome them. That is the greatest glory of this great India and it started achieving this glory from the *Ṛg Vedic* period onwards.

The whole tradition of India, Swami Vivekananda used to say, the whole history of India, its real inner strength and spirit, can be understood by understanding that brief utterance of the *Ṛg Veda* of five thousand years ago: *Ekam sat viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti*, 'Truth is one, sages call It by various names.' Names are different, forms are different, but the Truth is one and the same. By this idea being deeply inculcated into the minds of her people, India became a land of harmony, a land of toleration. Compared to any country outside, no major persecution or killing—except for some occasional very minor incidents—have taken place in our history. Therefore, *samagram mām* , 'know Me (God) in its totality', in its fullness. Because every personal experience will only deal with one aspect of the Divine, we are asked to practise respect and tolerance for other peoples' experiences as well.

That aspect of tolerance is expounded by our late President, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, in his Oxford lectures in that famous book *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*. This is his definition of religion and toleration, as we understand in India.

'Toleration is the homage that the finite mind pays to the inexhaustibility of the infinite.'

The infinite is inexhaustible. If I have an experience of the infinite and if I say, 'I have taken the whole infinite into me,' it will be foolish; there is so much left over that, others can also have other experiences of the infinite. Because of that, not only do I tolerate other people, but I also respect and accept as true other peoples' experiences. That is India's attitude. That is a very beautiful idea. You take a vessel, go to the ocean, bring back the whole vessel full of water. Then if you say, 'I will exhaust the whole ocean next time. Nothing will be left there thereafter.' It will be very foolish! Any number of persons can take any amount of water from the ocean, and the ocean will still remain in its fullness.

Sri Ramakrishna gave this parable. An ant went to a huge mound of sugar. It took one grain and ate it; it took another grain in its mouth; and on the way back to its home it thought, 'next time I shall exhaust the whole hill of sugar!' What a foolish thought! Such statements are made in religion—in all non-Indian religions of the world. That is what creates intolerance, misunderstanding, violence and war. That could not happen in India because of this idea of not mere toleration but also acceptance. There is such a thing as partial knowledge of Reality and complete knowledge of Reality.

Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, I shall tell how you will know Me fully, *samagram*; that is the language used here; *samagram* means 'full', 'totality'; *asamśayam samagram mām yathā jñāsyasi tacchṛṇu*, 'listen to Me on how to understand Me without doubt and in My fullness'. That is the first *śloka* of this chapter.

Then the next *śloka* adds one more important aspect to this teaching:

ज्ञानं तेऽहं सविज्ञानमिदं वक्ष्याम्यशेषतः ।
यज्ज्ञात्वा नेह भूयोऽन्यज्ज्ञातव्यमवशिष्यते ॥२॥

Jñānam te'ham savijñānam idam vakṣyāmyaśeṣataḥ;
Yajjñātvā neha bhūyo'nyat jñātavyam avaśiṣyate — 7. 2

'I shall tell you in full, about theoretical knowledge, along with experience, knowing which, nothing more here will remain to be known.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *Jñānam te'ham savijñānam idam vakṣyāmi aśeṣataḥ*, 'I shall tell you fully all about *jñāna* along with *vijñāna'. Jñāna* is 'knowledge'; *vijñāna* is 'experience'. What a beautiful difference between the two—*jñāna* and *vijñāna* ! *Vijñāna* is, 'intimate experience of the Divine'; *jñāna* is, 'understanding of the Divine, knowledge of the Divine'. So, *vakṣyāmi*, 'I shall expound to you'; *aśeṣataḥ*, 'all aspects of it'; *yajjñātvā neha bhūyo'nyat jñātavyam avaśiṣyate*, 'by knowing which nothing worth knowing will be left out'; everything worth knowing will be included; it is an all-inclusive knowledge.

Sri Ramakrishna gives a lucid description of *jñāna* and *vijñāna* (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 1942, New York edition, pp. 105–06):

'The *jñāni* gives up his identification with worldly things, discriminating, "not this, not this" (*neti, neti*). Only then can he realize Brahman. It is like reaching the roof of a house by leaving the steps behind, one by one.

'But the *vijñāni*, who is more intimately acquainted with Brahman, realizes something more. He realizes that the steps are made of the same materials as the roof: bricks, lime, and brick dust. That which is realized intuitively as Brahman, through the eliminating process of "not this, not this", is then found to have become the universe and all its living beings. The *vijñāni* sees that the Reality which is *nirguṇa*, without attributes, is also *saguṇa*, with attributes.

'A man cannot live on the roof for a long time. He comes down again. Those who realize Brahman in *samādhi* come down also and find that it is Brahman that has become the universe and its living beings. In the musical scale there are the notes, *sā, re, ga, ma, pa, dha,* and ni; but one cannot keep

one's voice on "*ni*" a long time. The ego does not vanish all together. The man coming down from *samādhi* perceives that it is Brahman that has become the ego, the universe, and all living beings. That is known as *vijñāna*. '

That is the wonderful effort of the human mind in India from the time of the Upaniṣads; that is how these qualities of compassion, tolerance, and understanding have come. We have respected even atheists or agnostics all throughout our history because, when one has the complete knowledge of the Reality, one will find even in the agnostic or the atheist, a person who is struggling to understand . He or she may not have arrived at any conclusion regarding the ultimate Reality. Naturally, one feels sympathy for such a person; we respect him or her. But if one holds on to a particular theory only, one will be destroying other believers. That never happened in India in a big way. In small small ways, here and there, through the ignorance of certain people, only some little narrowness and intolerance have been experienced in our history.

Yat jñātvā, 'knowing which'; *iha*, 'in this world'; *bhūyo'nyat*, 'anything else'; *jñātavyam*, 'what is to be known'; *na avaśiṣyate*, 'will not remain'. Everything will be included—totality of Reality. True philosophy deals with Reality in its fullness. Various sciences deal with Reality from various segmental points of view. For example, chemistry or physics deal with certain aspects of physical reality. And when you go to botany or physiology, another aspect comes in. All these deal with the external aspect. And then psychology and ethics, etc., deal with the inner life. Now, take all these, external and internal aspects of Reality, together. Then only you get the totality of Reality. That is why many philosophers in Europe define philosophy as 'the summation of all knowledge.' All knowledge must be included in philosophy. Nothing should be left out. That is what we succeeded to do in Vedānta; that is what is being expounded briefly in this part of the *Gītā* .

And verse 3 is a great verse often repeated in our discourses by scholars and saints:

मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद्यतति सिद्धये ।
यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वत: ॥३॥

Manuṣyāṇām sahasreṣu kaścit yatati siddhaye;
Yatatām api siddhānām kaścit mām vetti tattvataḥ — 7. 3

'A few, among thousands of men and women, strive for perfection; and a few perchance, among the blessed ones striving thus, know Me in reality.'

'Among thousands of people only a handful really struggle for spiritual perfection', *manuṣyāṇām sahasreṣu kaścit yatati siddhaye; siddhaye* means 'for spiritual perfection'; *kaścit yatati*, 'a few only strive', others are not concerned with it. They are busy with eating, drinking and various other pursuits; that is the first line. But, *yatatām api siddhānām*, 'even among those who pursue the highest perfection'; *kaścit mām vetti tattvataḥ*, 'just a few really understand Me as I truly am'—to understand God as given in the New Testament's language, 'in spirit and in truth'. God is to be understood in spirit and in truth, not as a reflex of our own mind, an image of our own personality. That is not the fullness of understanding. You can begin with it; but end with what God is in Its fullness. What is the nature of that philosophy? It is the contribution of India's Advaita to the world thought—that philosophy of non-duality, ultimate oneness of existence. We all come from the One; we all return to the One. That One is, *ekam eva advitīyam brahma*, 'Brahman is one only and non-dual'. That is the Brahman which is the theme of Vedanta and there you will find the idea of completeness, fullness; nothing is left out.

So, here it is pointed out: many try, but a few only achieve. It is like our Olympics. How many people participate in the running, and a few only reach the finals, the destination, of which only one will get the first place because of the limitations of the others.

In spiritual life also, they all start together, but according to our capacities, our speed will be limited; so, it will take more time for some. But, having said this, the main truth is: everyone will attain the goal some time or the other, because that is one's own true nature. So, everybody is capable of achieving the highest.

In the New Testament, Jesus said, ‘Many are called, but few are chosen’. This is like our employment business; out of ten thousand applications, ten will be taken, that is all. Similarly, in spiritual life, we all join the race, but because of the differences in capacity, endowments, etc., many are left behind; others go faster. In this condition, great are those left behind who say: ‘Go ahead. I respect you. I will come behind. I know I will also reach there, but it will take a longer time for me. I don’t mind it.’ That kind of making peace with oneself is absolutely essential. Unnecessarily troubling the mind and weakening it by self-praise or criticism of winners is not allowed in Vedanta. Have faith! Have faith! Everyone will attain to it; that is the right attitude. So, this is an important verse which is true to life; in every department of life you can verify the truth of this statement: *Manuṣyāṇām sahasreṣu kaścidyatati siddhaye*.

Hundreds of parties stand in our elections. Many independents also stand and get defeated. Among hundreds of candidates of parties, many of them lose, some even their deposit money, but a few win. So, this is the nature of human life in every sphere. Similarly, it is the same in spiritual life; it depends upon our capacity, our energy; all these characteristics are not equal in every human being. Possibility of spirituality is common in all, but the capacity to express it is not common in all; it is differentiated between one person and another.

Now, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that Reality can be divided into two departments: one is the reality revealed by the five senses; the other is what lies beyond the sensory level. If you want to achieve realization of the total Reality, you must take both these into view; not merely the external physical world revealed by the senses.

So, in this chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is dividing the Reality into two categories. He calls both *Prakṛti* or Nature—*Parā Prakṛti* and *Aparā Prakṛti. Prakṛti* is the Sanskrit word for nature. In the West, nature means only physical nature. In India, nature or *Prakṛti* means everything, physical and super-physical; the whole of Reality is *Prakṛti* . Therefore, we don’t have anything supernatural in Indian thought. In the West, because of the limited concept of nature, they have the supernatural in religion. But in science they don’t accept it. There is thus a conflict between the two. We, in India, don’t

have that problem. Our concept of *Prakṛti* or nature is comprehensive; whatever exists is *Prakṛti* ; whether it is inside or outside. So, we don't have or need the supernatural, but we have the super-physical, super-sensory, super-rational, or super-conscious. That is why our concept of nature does not conflict with the physical sciences, which do not accept anything supernatural.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa begins to classify two great departments of nature by which you can approach Reality. One is the sensory reality, revealed by the five senses, which is the subject of study for all the physical sciences; and the other, above the sensory level. Both are *Prakṛti*. The first one, Śrī Kṛṣṇa calls *Aparā Prakṛti*, ordinary or external Prakṛti; the second one, he calls *Parā Prakṛti*, 'superior, internal, or higher *Prakṛti*'. That is all. Two departments of *Prakṛti*—ordinary and extraordinary, with two types of sciences, according to the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad; one is called *Aparā Vidyā*, 'ordinary science'; the other is called *Parā Vidyā*, 'higher science'. These are all well classified by our great sages.

So, what constitutes this *aparā* aspect of *Prakṛti* , that first part of *Prakṛti*, the *Prakṛti* that is revealed to you as perishable by the five senses? The next *śloka* deals with it:

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।
अहंकार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥४॥

Bhūmirāpo'nalo vāyuḥ kham mano buddhireva ca;
Ahamkāra itīyam me bhinnā prakṛtiraṣṭadhā — 7. 4

'*Bhūmiḥ* (earth), *Ápaḥ* (water), *Analaḥ* (fire), *Vāyuḥ* (air), *Kham* (space), *manaḥ* (mind), *buddhiḥ* (intellect), and *ahamkāraḥ* (egoism): thus is My *Prakṛti* divided eightfold.'

'Different and eightfold is My *Prakṛti' , me bhinnā prakṛtiḥ aṣṭadhā* , says Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and that *Prakṛti* is what you find manifested as 'earth, water, fire, air, space, the mind, intellect and the ego' in human beings. All these are considered as My eightfold *Prakṛti* of the *aparā* type. That is the first sentence. *Bhinnā prakṛtiraṣṭadhā* , this is My nature. That means, in all

the physical things I am present. Why? As pure Consciousness, He is present in all these things. That is the first statement.

The next statement is very interesting:

अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम् ।
जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत् ॥५॥

Apareyam itastvanyām prakṛtim viddhi me parām;
Jīvabhūtām mahābāho yayedam dhāryate jagat — 7. 5

'This is the lower *Prakṛti* . But different from it, know, O mighty-armed, My higher *Prakṛti* —the principle of intelligence or Consciousness by which this manifested universe is sustained.'

Consider, *aparā iyam*, 'this eightfold Prakṛti to be My inferior *Prakṛti '; itastvanyām viddhi me parām*, 'besides this, now try to understand that *Parā Prakṛti* , that higher *Prakṛti* of Mine, different from this inferior *Prakṛti '; jīvabhūtām mahābāho*, 'which is of the nature of intelligence or consciousness, O Arjuna!'; *yayedam dhāryate jagat*, 'by which this whole manifested universe is sustained'. Pure Consciousness sustains the whole universe; that is higher *Prakṛti* and the technique and science of understanding that Prakṛti is different from the technique and science of understanding this lower *Prakṛti*. This is *aparā vidyā*, lower science, physical; that is *parā vidyā*, higher science, super-physical or transcendental or spiritual; whatever is above the sensory system is called the transcendental; that is all what it means. Above the sensory level is the transcendental level. *Loka*, and above it, *lokottara*, as Bhagavan Buddha would say: this world is called *loka* , that transcendental is *lokottara* . *Loka* plus *lokottara* is called 'the totality of Reality'. *Loka* alone cannot be the totality of Reality; *lokottara* alone cannot be the totality of Reality; *loka* plus *lokottara, aparā* plus *parā* —that is total Reality according to Vedanta. The whole world is dull dead matter from the starry system up to a lump of clay. *Jīva* is there in them, but not manifested; that manifestation will begin when cosmic evolution rises to organic evolution. From the Sanskrit word *jīva* comes the English words, gene and genetics. When the *jīva* appears on the scene, a new reality comes in, a new dimension comes in—*jīvabhūtām*

mahābāho yayedam dhāryate jagat , ‘Arjuna, Consciousness or Intelligence is what sustains this whole universe’.

This second aspect of reality was not there in modern physical science till now; only the first aspect was there; and they were telling us always, ‘This is the whole of reality; there is nothing higher; matter is everything.’ That kind of attitude is now slowly breaking down. In the West itself, many scientists themselves have begun to feel that this is only a limited aspect of reality; there is something higher. That something higher is consciousness, what you call intelligence. That is why, as new books come out from the press, you will find this classification of *Gītā* getting a corroboration.

The transition of scientific exploration from the external nature to the internal nature, which took place in India over 4000 years ago, finds a lucid exposition in Swami Vivekananda’s lecture on *Vedanta* in Lahore, now in Pakistan, on November 17, 1897: (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* , Vol. 3, pp. 393-94)

‘Two worlds there are in which we live, one, the external, the other, internal. Human progress has been made, from days of yore, almost in parallel lines along both these worlds. The search began in the external, and man at first wanted to get answers for all the deep problems from outside nature. Man wanted to satisfy his thirst for the beautiful and the sublime from all that surrounded him; he wanted to express himself and all that was within him in the language of the concrete; and grand indeed were the answers he got, most marvellous ideas of God and worship, and most rapturous expressions of the beautiful. Sublime ideas came from the external world indeed. But the other, opening out for the humanity later, laid out before him a universe yet sublimer, yet more beautiful, and infinitely more expansive. In the *Karma Kāṇḍa* portion of the Vedas, we find the most wonderful ideas of religion inculcated, we find the most wonderful ideas about an overruling Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe presented before us, in language sometimes the most soul-stirring. Most of you perhaps remember that most wonderful *śloka* in the *Ṛg Veda Samhitā* where you get the description of chaos, perhaps the sublimest that has ever been attempted yet. In spite of all this, we find it is only a painting of the sublime outside, we find that yet it is gross, that something

of matter yet clings to it. Yet we find that is only the expression of the Infinite in the language of matter, in the language of the finite, it is the infinite of the muscles and not of the mind; it is the infinite of space, and not of thought.

'Therefore, in the second portion of *Jñāna Kāṇḍa*, we find there is altogether a different procedure. The first was a search in external nature for the truths of the universe; it was an attempt to get the solution of the deep problems of life from the material world. *Yasyaite himavanto mahitvā*, "Whose glory these (mighty) Himalayas declare." This is a grand idea, but yet it was not grand enough for India. The Indian mind had to fall back, and the research took a different direction altogether, from the external the search came to the internal, from matter to mind. There arose the cry, "When a man dies, what becomes of him?" *Astītyeke nāyamastīti caike*, "Some say that he exists, others, that he is gone; say, O king of Death, what is the truth?" An entirely different procedure we find here. The Indian mind got all that could be had from the external world, but it did not feel satisfied with that; it wanted to search further, to dive into its own soul, and the final answer came.

'The Upaniṣads, or the Vedanta, or the *Áraṇyakās*, or *Rahasya*, is the name of this portion of the Vedas. Here we find at once that religion has got rid of all external formalities. Here we find at once that spiritual things are told not in the language of matter, but in the language of the spirit; the superfine, in the language of the superfine. No more any grossness attaches to it, no more is there any compromise with things of worldly concern. Bold, brave, beyond the conception of the present day, stand the giant minds of the sages of the Upaniṣads, declaring the noblest truths that have been preached to humanity, without any compromise, without any fear.'

The West developed philosophy, even from ancient Greek times, based on external nature. That is called speculative philosophy. Western religions also developed their theology, based on knowledge of external nature. Western physical science also is a study of external nature. Since it is a thorough investigation through scientific methods and has produced tangible results, it has overthrown the erstwhile dominance of Western philosophy and Western theology. This resulted in the growth of scepticism,

agnosticism, and atheism in the world. Some years ago, an interesting item I read in a Western book. A Western philosopher was to deliver a public lecture; a Western Christian theologian was the President of the meeting. The theologian, in the course of his opening speech said: 'When I introduce to you our speaker, the philosopher, I shall take this opportunity to define philosophy for you; it is searching for a black cat in a dark room which is not there! I now request our philosopher to give his lecture.' He was embarrassed; and he began his speech by telling that, 'our friend, the theologian, has defined my subject, but he did not define his subject. I shall, however, define it for you all: theology is the searching for a black cat in a dark room which is not there, but *claiming that he has found it !*' There was a great applause!

This is the fate of all speculative philosophies and theologies. Is there not, can there not be a scientific, i.e. *experiential* approach to philosophy and religion? India gives the answer—Yes. The transition from speculative to *experiential* approach to religion and philosophy developed in India over 4000 years ago in the Upaniṣads when its brilliant minds turned their investigation from external nature to internal nature, to the study of the depth dimension of human nature.

This transition and its profound fruits are what the above passage from Vivekananda tells us. Today's physical science, especially nuclear physics and twentieth century biology, is slowly turning into that direction. The importance of the datum of the observer in dealing with nuclear phenomenon is the first step in that direction; if pursued further to enquire into the nature of the observer, physics will transcend its physical limitations and enter into a vast spiritual dimension. Biology has already entered into the spiritual dimension as cleverly hinted by Sir Julian Huxley in his book, most important as considered by him, *Evolution: A New Synthesis*, when dealing with the nature of evolution at the human stage. He says that, at the human stage, organic evolution has advanced into *Psychosocial* evolution; it is actually spiritual evolution, but he was afraid of using that word.

That spiritual evolution or psychosocial evolution has two steps, broadly speaking. First: ethical and moral; what is called today the value-

orientation to integrate human beings into a peaceful and harmonious national and international world order. And second: the state which Vedanta calls mukti or complete spiritual freedom. *India's Vedanta, therefore, treats the science of values as a link between physical sciences and the science of spirituality*. Such an advance of human evolution in the modern age is an advance from knowledge to wisdom. If such an advance does not take place, and humanity continues at the current level of mere sensory satisfactions and ever-increasing consumerism, physical science and technology will turn out to be the enemy of humanity. The British agnostic thinker, the late Bertrand Russell, has given this warning in his post-Second-World War book, *Impact of Science on Society* (pp. 120-21):

'We are in the middle of a race between human skill as to means and human folly as to ends. Given sufficient folly as to ends, every increase in the skill required to achieve them is to the bad. The human race has survived hitherto owing to ignorance and incompetence; but given knowledge and competence combined with folly, there can be no certainty of survival. Knowledge is power, but it is power for evil as much as for good. It follows that, *unless men increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow*.' (italics, not Russell's)

This is exactly the message that the *Gītā* conveys to humanity in the modern age.

Bertrand Russell's above statement is an echo of the challenge of the ancient *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* to the modern space age (6. 20):

Yadā carmavat ākāśam veṣṭayiṣyanti mānavāḥ;
Tadā devam avijñāya duḥkhasyānto bhaviṣyati —

'Humanity may roll up space like a piece of leather, still there will be no end of sorrow without knowing one's (innate) Divinity.'

The same Upaniṣad says, in another verse, that the investigation into the human soul leads to the knowledge of the one infinite and Immortal Source of the universe (2. 15):

Yadātmatatvena tu brahmatatvam
dīpopameneha yuktaḥ prapaśyet;

Ajam dhruvam sarvatatvaiḥ viśuddham
jñātva devam mucyate sarvapāśaiḥ —

‘When the self-controlled spiritual aspirant realizes, in this very body, the Truth of Brahman through the Truth of the Atman, self-luminous as light, then, knowing the Divinity which is unborn, eternal, and untouched by all the modifications of nature, becomes free from all sins.’

This profound truth is what we find in the great statements of Jesus in the *New Testament* : ‘The kingdom of God does not come from observation, lo, it is here, lo, it is there; for the kingdom of God is within you’; ‘blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’

This same teaching is also found in one of the sayings of Prophet Mohammad, known as *Hādith-e-Urufi* and *Hādith-e-Suidsi* , quoted and referred to often by Jalaluddin Rumi in his famous *Masnavi* :

Man arafa nai sahū
faqo araba nab bahū —

‘He alone who recognizes his own Self can recognize God.’

Jalaluddin Rumi exclaims elsewhere:

‘In each human spirit is a Christ concealed, to be helped or hindered, to be hurt or healed. If from any human soul you lift the veil, you will find a Christ there without fail.’

A few days ago, Fred Hoyle, astro-physicist of England, was here in Hyderabad speaking in the Birla Planetarium. I talked with him about his book written some forty years ago. Perfectly materialistic was that book. Now he has written a new book, *The Intelligent Universe*; that’s a wonderful book in which intelligence has come in. He said, ‘yes, we have changed our attitude; you can’t explain the universe without that principle of intelligence.’ What a wonderful idea! Even in biology, in all the subjects dealing with the living cell, many scientists, even today, will dispense with all concepts of intelligence. Everything is mechanical, chemistry and physics, nothing else. That is the view of some people. But other scientists are finding, ‘No, that cannot be.’ The behaviour of the living cell—what a wonderful behaviour: it develops, it grows, it multiplies, it replaces itself, it

doesn't need external material to repair itself; from itself it finds material to repair itself—what a wonderful thing it is! And so also, the little cell becomes multiple and variegated, and becomes a living child! What a wonderful growth it is in biology! So, in all these fields, many scientists have begun to feel that mere mechanical explanation cannot explain the events and things within the living being. You do need that second category called intelligence or consciousness. All goal-oriented actions need consciousness to direct the activity. A particular cell, or a particular gene in the cell, goes to a particular target in the development of the embryo. What a tremendous directional movement we find there! All these cannot be treated as merely physical, or mechanical, though many scientists still stick to the mechanical theories of the nineteenth century. They are called reductionists, who reduce everything to the physics and chemistry of the world. They are not respected. Slowly, slowly scientists are going beyond that reductionist attitude.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells here, 'know this to be my inferior *Prakṛti*; there is also My superior *Prakṛti*, by which the whole universe is animated'. *Yayedam dhāryate jagat*, 'by which the whole world is sustained', namely, 'by intelligence', *jīvabhūtām*. The same divine Reality has two dimensions: *aparā* and *parā*. This *aparā* is *jaḍa* or 'inert'; this *parā* is 'consciousness' or *cit*, as we call it in Sanskrit. *Cit* and *jaḍa* are the two aspects. *Jaḍa* is what you see all around you. Only in the living self will you find the *cit* manifested. According to our philosophy, even in the *jaḍa*, the *cit* is there. The *jaḍa* is not developed enough to manifest its *cit* dimension, but when it becomes developed, slowly that manifestation comes. So, all evolution, according to Vedanta, is manifestation of something hidden deeply within, and so Vedanta calls it *evolution of structure and manifestation of Consciousness*. The material structure evolves. The main Consciousness is there, but it finds it easier to manifest through the structure that is evolved. In a single living cell, only a little Consciousness can find manifestation because it is not fully evolved. But, when the cells multiply and become diversified, they become integrated into an organism, and then Consciousness is manifested more and more there. The same thing happens when it develops a cerebral system in a human being. Consciousness is much more manifested there. What is manifesting? Consciousness. What is

evolving? Not Consciousness. Consciousness has *no* evolution; it is always the same. Evolution is only in the structure, and by the structural evolution you manifest more and more Consciousness. What a beautiful idea! A baby's body has only a very elementary structure; by the time he or she is twelve or thirteen, new values begin to manifest in the child; for example, sex maturity comes at twelve or thirteen and the body evolves by which it is able to manifest it. When you fully develop the structure, i.e. the body-mind complex, and make it pure, then you will find the Divine manifesting in you, in me, in all.

This is how Vedanta explains evolution, which is a continuous process of manifestation from ordinary piece of matter to the Self, to the highest Buddha, and other great spiritual luminaries. The *cit* manifests through the *jaḍa* or lifeless matter; that *jaḍa* undergoes changes to manifest more and more of the *cit* ; that is the language of Vedanta on the subject. The human being is described in Vedanta as *cit-jaḍa-granthī* , 'a composite of *cit* and *jaḍa* '. Both are there in us, *jaḍa* element and the *cit* element. How the *cit* handles the *jaḍa* is our responsibility. Very often, in many people, the *jaḍa* handles the *cit* , and controls it. That is very unfortunate. That means regression. Real progress is when the *cit* becomes more and more prominent in your life, and *jaḍa* becomes your servant as Swami Vivekananda said in the 1893 Chicago Parliament of Religions: 'matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter'. In today's civilization, matter is the master, and the human beings, who developed matter into consumer goods, are the servants of matter, because they don't know anything about the *cit* aspect of Reality. This is the importance of this *Gītā* classification.

When I handle the next few verses, you will find a wonderful commentary of Śaṅkarācārya on verses, 4 to 6. There you will find the scientific mind at work—how Reality is presented in a comprehensive way. Nothing is left out, and so science becomes complete. That is the language also of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*. What is *brahma-vidyā* or the science of Brahman? It is *sarvavidyā pratiṣṭhā*, 'the basis of every *vidyā* or science'. The totality of Reality is called Brahman, the Infinite, Immortal Consciousness, which is the one source of the whole universe, and *brahma-vidyā* is the Science that consummates all other sciences; it is the Science of sciences.

That principle of Consciousness, which is the totality of all experiences and of all existence, is the highest Reality called in Vedanta, Brahman or Atman. It is of the nature of pure intelligence, pure consciousness, *jñānam*. That is the language used in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad . What is Brahman? It is satyam *jñānam* anantam brahma, 'Brahman is Truth, Intelligence, and Infinity'. That is what sustains the whole universe. This is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling here.

Having said this, in the next *śloka* Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

एतद्योनीनि भूतानि सर्वाणीत्युपधारय ।
अहं कृत्स्नस्य जगतः प्रभवः प्रलयस्तथा ॥६॥

Etat yonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇi ityupadhāraya;
Aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā — 7. 6

'Know that these (two Prakṛtis) are the womb of all beings; I am the origin and dissolution of the whole universe.'

Etat yonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇi iti upadhāraya, 'please understand that all things in this world are the products of these two sources'. In the universe, you can see nothing outside of these two: *cit* and *acit*, consciousness and matter. You can see everywhere either *cit* or *acit* ; nothing else. *Yoni* means 'source'. *Aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says therefore, 'these are my two natures; through these two natures, I am the origin and dissolution of the whole universe.'

The commentary of Śaṅkarācārya on this verse is very beautiful and thought-provoking: *Prakṛti dvaya dvāreṇa aham sarvajñaḥ īśvaraḥ jagataḥ kāraṇam*, 'I, the all-knowing Lord, am the cause of this universe through the twofold nature.' What is the cause or source of this world? We ask this question: what is behind this world? The word 'cause' is used in the sense in which it is used in Sāṅkhyā philosophy, and also in modern scientific thought. Cause and effect are non-different; that is the idea of 'cause'. The cause continues in the effect; it is not external. And therefore, 'I am the cause of this universe, through the twofold nature': ordinary nature, which you study in physical science; and extraordinary nature, which you study as intelligence, as consciousness, is the science of spirituality. These are two

aspects of one single Reality. Whatever exists has come from these two, from one or the other. When we study cosmology, we deal only with the physical aspect of things. When we study consciousness, when we study the nerve impulse, when we study the ways of the mind, we are dealing with another subject; a new value has come in, namely, intelligence or consciousness. We have to explain what exactly is the source of this consciousness that we find here. It is a tremendous datum which evolution has thrown up here. Swami Vivekananda, in his lecture in England about 90 years ago, said: 'A little worm is sitting on a railway track. From a long distance a train is coming. There is vibration on the railway track. A little stone on the track does not, cannot move away and is crushed. That little worm has the intelligence to protect itself; so it quietly moves aside.' That little worm has this tremendous datum called consciousness. Goal-directed action can come only through life and consciousness. And therefore, this language which Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses here, this second datum, namely, consciousness, *yayā idam dhāryate jagat*, is 'what is fundamental and sustaining the whole universe'. This is Śaṅkarācārya's commentary upon this verse. God in Vedanta is that Reality which is the cause of this universe through its double nature, *aparā* and parā . These two aspects of the Divine constitute the cause of the universe. That is why, in the Upaniṣads, they often mention creation as, 'the Lord *projected* this world and entered into it and remained there, like a spider that creates its web out of itself and lives in that web.' So, the Lord projected this universe; the world is not a *creation*, but it is a *projection*. In Sanskrit, *sṛṣṭi* means projection. There is no mention of creation in Vedanta. Therefore, Vedanta says, 'He projects this universe and lives in it, as the Self, as you and I, as consciousness', *tat sṛṣṭvā tadeva anuprāviśat*. In a cosmological sense, you cannot discover Him here because He is deep within the whole thing that you call *acit* or not-Self, though, according to Vedanta, even in *acit* , *cit* is there; everything is *cit* , but not palpable, not capable of being experienced. Only when *acit* develops into the living cell, does consciousness begin to appear. Before that you can't trace consciousness in anything in the universe. In the far distant galaxies, you can't trace consciousness. Consciousness is a tremendous value thrown up from within evolution, and as I said earlier, this evolution is only an evolution of structure; there is no evolution in consciousness. Consciousness is one and non-dual; by structural evolution,

consciousness manifests more and more. Today, this fact has to be emphasized again and again. In the Vedantic language we say: evolution of structure and manifestation of what is ever present within it as consciousness; that is the nature of evolution. This was not accepted by modern physical science till recent decades; they were absolutely materialistic in outlook; only matter, dull dead matter is there according to them. We can explain everything through that dull dead matter. That was the rigid materialism of the 19th century, being carried over to the 20th century by some scientists even today. But fortunately, some scientists have swung over to this understanding, that this dull dead matter cannot explain the whole aspects of the experiences in this world. You must have something else.

That something else is exactly what Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here: *apareyam itastvanyām prakṛtim viddhi me parām*, 'this is ordinary nature; listen to Me about My *parā prakṛti*, higher nature'; *jīvabhūtām*, 'of the nature of consciousness'. The little cell exhibits a new dimension of reality; you can find that *parā prakṛti* manifested there in a very elementary form. It was there earlier, but it was not tangible, not manifested. When evolution progresses to the living cell level, then it finds manifestation. That is why the living cell has the capacity to duplicate itself; matter duplicating itself is called the living cell. So, there you find a new datum appearing. That datum is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa refers to here as *parā prakṛti*, 'of the nature of intelligence', *jīvabhūtām*. Those scientists today, devoted to materialism, will say that we can explain consciousness—this behaviour of the cell, the behaviour of the human being, the behaviour of a Shakespeare, behaviour of even great spiritual teachers—in terms of dull dead matter. That is called a very rigid type of materialism—*reductionism*, as mentioned earlier. Whatever great thoughts you have, you can explain them in terms of the genetic constitution, the chemistry and physics of the body. That is the extreme reductionist view of several scientists in India as well as abroad. But the hopeful sign is that a number of great scientists are breaking away from this reductionist attitude, truly recognizing a second principle apart from the dull dead matter principle. That second principle Śrī Kṛṣṇa refers to as *jīvabhūtām*, the presence of consciousness, intelligence. You can't do without it to explain this world. It will be highly reductionist and therefore

unscientific in any sense of the term. That is why today's materialism is getting a break by the new developments in physical science itself.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here, 'I am the cause of this universe as the eternal Self of all, as the Lord of the Universe, through my twofold nature as *aparā prakṛti* and *parā prakṛti*; both are part and parcel of My nature.' In America there are any number of scientists who are pursuing this new line of thinking that dull dead materialism cannot explain all aspects of the universe. We must have the second aspect of nature—that *jīvabhūtām*. The place of consciousness is being increasingly recognized, and it is the subject of research in modern neurology. This is also a very big subject of controversy today. Fortunately, outstanding neurologists have accepted the idea that you cannot explain human behaviour based only on one item, namely, the brain; you have to have the second item, namely, consciousness or the mind; the mind and the brain. Brain alone cannot explain everything. Therefore, here you have a centre of thought which has become very crucial for the development of science; the whole of modern science will undergo a tremendous revolution, leading to spiritual development, if this thought gets prominence in physical science: that the brain cannot explain all aspects of neural behaviour, that there is a place for the mind. What the Vedanta has declared ages ago is being explained with great scientific precision by many aspects of modern science. For the last hundred years, every aspect of physical science has been to confirm what Vedanta has said ages ago. Not one single thought has gone against the teachings of Vedanta; moreover, modern physical science gives all such thoughts a more secure experimental basis. Our sages had realized the truth through their own internal spiritual experiences, but the modern scientists are showing it through external physical and psychological experiments as well.

In this connection, it is good to know those neurologists, who are supporting the idea that behind the brain there is a mind and both are needed to explain human behaviour. That is a crucial observation and we have some of our great neurologists who are now affirming this truth.

Until a few decades ago, psychology and neurology were both highly materialistic. It did not need any non-material reality to deal with human behaviour. But, as I said, several neurologists are breaking away from this

crude materialism. They are trying to experiment and demonstrate the truth of the mind behind the brain. So, brain study of a new type is going on all over the world; formerly, it was only the study of a dead man's brain, a dead man's nervous system; *but now it is the study of the living brain, the living nervous system*. That is a wonderful change that has come in neurology, and a further development has come. They used to put people in the unconscious state when they studied the brain; now they keep people conscious, and you can hear the conversation between the scientist and the patient when the brain surgery is going on. That is a new development that is giving you a new knowledge of the true nature of the human psyche. Among such scientists, one was the late Wilder Penfield of Montreal Neurological Institute. He put a patient on the table, removed the bone cover of the head, and started operating on the brain. The brain feels no pain, and, therefore, one could operate on a patient who was conscious as well. And then there was a conversation between the doctor and the patient. From this study, Wilder Penfield realized that one can't explain human behaviour on the basis of neurone action alone—action of the neurones which constitute the various segments of the brain. You need to understand that there is a mind behind the brain; that conclusion he has given in his book. I will just read presently that portion of his book where the subject is expressed. Earlier, we had the pioneer in modern neurology, Sir Charles Sherrington. In his early book, *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System*, he had not found much place for mind, though he knew that there must be something like the mind, but neurology could not vouch for the truth of the mind.

As I said earlier, Vedanta has said ages ago that this human being is a *cit-jaḍa-granthī*; a beautiful expression, 'the integration of *cit* and *jaḍa* '. What is consciousness is *cit* and what is inert matter is *jaḍa* ; these two are combined in the human system. They are both there, the physics and chemistry is there; there is something higher also there; that is the Vedantic way of putting it—*cit-jaḍa-granthī*. This idea comes through writings of both Sir Charles Sherrington and Wilder Penfield. Here is a passage from Wilder Penfield:

'I started as a materialist. That is all that we can handle, but sheer fact began to stare me in the face, and I found I can't explain this phenomenon

in terms of mere brain; I was compelled to consider the reality of the mind behind the brain.'

That was the change similar to that which came to Sherrington.

It is almost like repeating what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is saying in the *Gītā*. That is why I want to share these passages with you. There is so much of similarity. Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells that 'by the twofold nature, I am the cause of the universe'; not a one-fold nature, but all nature, both lower and higher; that is the language he has used here.

In June 1937, Sir Charles Sherrington wrote a Foreword to his book, *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System*, which was then being republished in his honour by the Physiological Society. The last paragraph of his Foreword expresses his conclusion on it all. Here is the passage:

'That our being should consist of two fundamental elements offers, I suppose, no greater inherent improbability than that it should rest on one only.'

There is *parā prakṛti*; there is also *aparā prakṛti* ; it is not improbable at all. That is what Sherrington means. But when you come to the great neurologist, Wilder Penfield, he summarises all his discoveries during his long years of neurological surgery etc., in his book: *The Mystery of Mind – A Critical Study of Consciousness and the Human Brain: Relation between the Two*. I am reading out just two paragraphs from there. I quoted this in my inaugural lecture on *Neurology and What Lies Beyond* , at the All India Neurological Conference in Hyderabad in December 1987. It is a small book published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai.

Wilder Penfield says:

'For my own part, after years of striving to explain the mind on the basis of brain action alone, I have come to the conclusion that it is simpler and far easier to be logical if one adopts the hypothesis that our being thus consists of two fundamental elements; if that is true, it could still be true that the energy required comes to our mind during our waking hours through the highest brain mechanism: our nervous system and the brain. They supply energy even for our consciousness. So far as the awakening system is concerned, that is not eliminated by this new discovery because it

seems to me certain that it will always be quite impossible to explain the mind on the basis of neurone action within the brain.'

All the various neurones in the brain and their action can explain consciousness according to materialistic neurologists. Penfield says about this:

'No, this cannot be done. And because it seems to me that the mind develops and matures independently throughout the individual's life, as though it were a continuing element, and because the computer, which the brain is, must be programmed and operated by an agency capable of independent understanding, I am forced to choose the proposition that our being is to be explained on the basis of two fundamental elements. This, to my mind, offers the greater likelihood of leading us to the final understanding towards which so many…scientists are striving.'

What a wonderful way of putting it! *Many scientists are striving to know what is the truth about this*. If your mind is free to accept new facts and modify old theories in terms of new facts, that's called science. There is a theory; there is a contrary fact; one single contrary fact can break a theory. That is what is happening with the mechanical physics of the Newtonian period in modern nuclear physics. Nuclear physics has overturned many of the conclusions of mechanistic physics. Similarly, in neurology, we have certain old theories; we want to stick to the theory and twist the facts which don't suit the theory; that is not science. A fact is the greatest thing you have to respect; theory must be altered in terms of the facts. That is what these scientists are doing and, when they do so, they just repeat what Śrī Kṛṣṇa said in the *Gītā* ages ago in verse 5 quoted before.

In evolution, these two aspects of nature, parā and *aparā*, both appear; but the parā nature became manifest much later. When the living cell began to appear, parā nature appeared; until then it was completely submerged in the *aparā* nature. The whole of evolution is this kind of liberation of *parā Prakṛti* involved in *aparā Prakṛti* . Thus, we want to release the grip of lower nature on our higher nature, i.e. consciousness, to make it attain 'spiritual liberation', i.e. *mukti*, in the Vedantic language. This is the struggle of consciousness or intelligence to return to its own original state and discover that the whole world is nothing but an ocean of Pure

Consciousness. ‘Everything in this manifested universe is Brahman, the Immortal,’ *brahmaivedam amṛtam (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad)*.

One English word we use, namely, ‘experience’; in Sanskrit we call it *anubhava*. Now, in materialistic cosmology you do not find this factor called *anubhava*, or experience, throughout cosmic history. The sun has no experience; so also the stellar system; none of them has experience. But when evolution came to the level of the living cell, this new datum came into view—experience; the cell has experience. Wherever there is a subject, i.e. *dṛk*, and an object, i.e. *dṛśyam*, the subject knowing the object, that makes for experience; that experience was not there throughout cosmic evolution; that is an important factor. But, from the living cell onwards, experience becomes a profound datum of the cosmos; and that datum becomes gradually clarified as evolution advances. In subject-object relations, much of the subject is caught in the object itself! And we, at the human level, are trying to separate the subject from the object; it is highly mixed up in our system. As I said, though we are *cit* , we are, in the beginning, *cit-jaḍa-granthī*, consciousness and matter mixed together in a binding; that is called the human system. We are asked to separate the two, to realize our true Conscious nature as the Atman, pure Immortal Consciousness. That is why that great Upaniṣadic dictum from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* says: *tat tvam asi , tat tvam asi*, ‘you are That, you are That’. You are not this lump of matter, you are that infinite Consciousness caught up in this matter. *Tat tvam asi*, ‘you are That’; what a profound utterance it is! This is the understanding that is meant for human development and fulfilment. A nuclear scientist like Schrodinger appreciates this *Tat tvam asi* truth.

Man’s evolution is the liberation of the source of all values, namely, Pure Consciousness embedded in the physical system or material system. That is the language of Vedanta. That is how we study the nature of evolution, cosmic, as well as organic, as well as human—three levels of evolution. First is the cosmic evolution; then you get organic evolution, beginning from the living cell; and from human life you start a new type of evolution, the spiritual evolution: how to release this Pure Consciousness from the clutches of this material world and the physical body?

We must be free; we must be free. Everybody is struggling to be free. That freedom is the freedom of Consciousness from the clutches of matter; and when you succeed, you become free, *here and now*; you are fully developed, you are enlightened. The one who has realized the infinite Atman has become completely free from the clutches of matter. Matter is his or her servant, not he or she the servant of matter. But today's civilization makes the human being completely a servant of matter, submerging him or her in matter; and this has developed into what is called unchecked consumerism with its evil effects on nature and the human being. The new scientific discoveries are going to release men and women from that condition. It is in that context that books like the *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads will become books of tremendous world significance. Upaniṣads, the *Gītā*, and Swami Vivekananda's literature—in all these you find this truth expounded: how to save humanity from its submergence in matter. Men and women have become slaves of matter, and this is what finds expression as unchecked consumerism today. They have forgotten their own divine nature. This is the greatest Truth, and not dogma, that men and women have to learn today.

That is what Swami Vivekananda did when he went to the 1893 Chicago Parliament of Religions where, in his Address, he quoted the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* and said that our sages address all humanity as 'children of immortal bliss'—*amṛtasya putrāḥ*, not a child of darkness, not a child of matter, but 'a child of the immortal'; you are all children of the immortal. That is what the Indian sages call you. Swamiji said that. It was a new message to them. They had never heard this before. But it is very fascinating. This remark I heard from a questioner when I spoke at the Moscow State University and again from a youth when I addressed a public meeting in West Berlin. This message is now catching up all over the world. The dignity of human beings, their greatness, their glory, comes from this infinite Divine nature. One doesn't know it, but not knowing it doesn't abolish the truth of it; the sooner you know, the better.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa describes 'My lower nature' in the fourth verse, and 'My higher nature' in the fifth verse; and the sixth verse combines these two. These two together constitute the totality of nature through which He, the Divine Incarnation, is the cause of the projection, maintenance, and

dissolution of the universe. The world came from Pure Consciousness, the world is Pure Consciousness, the world will return to Pure Consciousness; that is the nature of this universe, according to the Upaniṣads.

Śaṅkarācārya gives a wonderful definition of the nature of the ultimate Reality; 'that is ultimate Reality from which the universe cannot be separated at any time—past, present, and future'; then only it is ultimate Reality. Consciousness is the ultimate Reality because from it nothing can be separated; everything is always part and parcel of that Consciousness, sometimes hidden, i.e. not manifested, or sometimes manifested; but Consciousness is ; that is what we call Brahman. Brahman is not a thing, Brahman is Pure Consciousness. In the most beautiful verses in the Upaniṣads this subject is expounded and Śaṅkarācārya says in his commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* : 'the word Atman and the word Brahman have no particular meaning; you can use any other word; it doesn't constitute the name of Reality. Some word has to be used, therefore, we use the word Brahman or Atman'. Atman and Brahman are one. The Consciousness that is caught up in your body-mind complex, and the Consciousness that is behind the universe, both are one and the same. *Átamaiva idam sarvam and brahmaiva idam sarvam*, 'Atman alone is all this universe' and 'Brahman alone is all this universe'. The whole universe is nothing but Pure Consciousness.

'The human being, thus, is essentially the immortal Atman; all the rest about him or her is lower nature or *aparā prakṛti* .'

While commenting on verse 4, Śaṅkarācārya says:

'The earth (in the verse) refers to the rudimentary earth element, and not to the gross earth; … similarly, water, etc., also refer to the rudimentary elements of water, fire, air, and space. Mind refers to the cause of the mind, viz. the ego-sense; intellect also refers to the cause of ego-sense, the *mahat* (of the Sāṅkhya philosophy).'

The ever-present light of the immortal Atman behind makes the mind, intellect, and *ahamkāra* or ego-sense, intelligent and active; but they are essentially, says Vedanta, subtle evolutes of matter which can reflect the light of the Atman. The separation of the mind from the brain by advanced

modern neurologists is only the forerunner to finally reaching the only principle of intelligence, namely, the Atman in the innermost core of the human being and in the whole universe. Śaṅkarācārya sings thus in his *Nirvāṇa Śatakam*:

Mano-buddhyahamkāra cittāni nāham
na ca śrotrajihve na ca ghrāṇa-netre;
Na ca vyomabhūmi na tejo na vāyuḥ
cidānandarūpaḥ śivo'ham śivo'ham —

'I am not the mind or intellect, or ego-sense or *citta* the mind-stuff, … I am Śiva, of the nature of *cit*, Consciousness or Knowledge, and *ānanda* or Bliss.'

Not only the human body but also the whole universe is lighted by the Light of the Atman (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, II. ii. 15):

Na tatra sūryo bhāti na candratārakam
nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yamagniḥ;
Tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam
tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti —

'There (in the Atman) the sun does not illumine, nor the moon and the stars; nor do these lightnings illumine (there); and what to speak of this (domestic) fire; when That shines, everything shines after That; by Its light, all this (manifested universe) is lighted.'

Now, therefore, in the seventh chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa took up this idea: 'I shall tell you *jñāna*m along with *vijñāna*m ', *jñāna*m te'ham sa*vijñāna*m, 'knowledge along with experience'; *vakṣyāmi aśeṣataḥ*, 'I shall tell you in its entirety.'

Sri Ramakrishna gives a beautiful illustration: the fruit of the *bel* tree, or *vilva* tree. Generally, people take the pulp from within, make *sherbat* or a drink out of it and drink it; that's called *bel* fruit; the pulp is the most useful part of the *bel* . But if you want to understand the totality of the *bel*, you must take also the fibre, the seed, and the outer cover; all these put together is the *bel*, though for eating, only the flesh is essential. So, in this universe, there is such a thing as totality of Reality. There both *aparā prakṛti* and *parā prakṛti* are to be taken into account; then you get the totality of

Reality. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa has been telling from the beginning of this chapter. This chapter is important from that point of view.

Then he says *yat jñātvā neha bhūyo'nyat jñātavyam avaśiṣyate*, 'by knowing which there will be nothing else left to be known'. What a challenging statement it is! In fact, the word *brahma vidyā* is explained in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* as *sarva vidyā pratiṣṭhā* , 'the basis of every science'. The essence of every knowledge is *brahma vidyā*, Brahman standing for totality. Even the etymology of the word is that it expands and fills everything; that is the meaning of Brahman. So, that is called the totality. In modern Western cosmology you have, as totality, a background material, and into that small material the whole universe was compressed. That background exploded, and there is a study of what happened after that explosion. From that explosion, slowly, the universe began to unfold. In the beginning it was a singularity, as they call it in astro-physical language. There was no differentiation into atoms, molecules, electrons, etc.; nothing material was there; everything was simple energy. Then slowly diversification came; from unity to diversity, to greater and greater diversity. Vedanta also says all evolution is a transition from uniformity or unity, to diversity; it is put in a very simple language. Suppose that background material could speak. What it would have said? *Eko'ham bahusyām*, 'I am one, let me be many'; that is what the Upaniṣads say. If the background material could express its own intention, it would have said: 'I am one, let me be many'. The one becoming the many, nature undifferentiated becoming nature differentiated, that is called creation, or truly, manifestation; that is called evolution. This is common to Vedanta and modern cosmology, except that in the case of modern cosmology, the background material is a dull dead piece of matter. Modern science has no conception of Consciousness behind this universe. That conception will come, as I said earlier, through further developments in modern neurology, when it finds that mind is separate from brain. If this becomes confirmed, then the whole background of the modern cosmology will undergo a revolutionary change and that change will be exactly what has been expounded in Vedanta—satyam *jñāna*m anantam brahma, 'Brahman or Atman is Truth, Knowledge and Infinity'. From That, the whole universe has come. So, we say, from God we came, in God we live, and to God we

return, using the word God in a Vedantic sense, not an extracosmic God as we have in monotheistic religions. That is the language used in the second aphorism of the *Brahma-sūtras : janmādyasya yataḥ*, 'from Whom is the origin, sustenance and dissolution of the whole universe'. That is Brahman, that is the Reality we are devoted to; that is the principle of religion. That is also the principle we study in physical science in the manifested state as the universe. There is no conflict between the two; because of the unity behind this diversity, there is no conflict between science and religion in India. It would be the same in the West also when the West realizes that that background material is the principle of Consciousness, which becomes concretised as the manifested universe. There is plenty of scope for this kind of change in modern cosmology, when this new truth becomes available to investigators in neurology: that we can't explain the human system based only on one factor; we do need the second factor. And once you accept the second factor, the whole cosmology also will have to change because this factor must be there in the original background material as well. Ultimately, when we recognize this conscious principle in the ultimate Reality, then the whole of nature will appear in a new light, the concept of God and the Divine will appear in a new light. After all, what reveals this universe? That background material. Even the tiny movements of the body are regulated by that energy that is in that cosmic background material. If that is so, it becomes God. As it is, we cannot call it God; it is dull dead matter. The whole thing will be transformed when these truths, which Western neurology is trying to discover and expound, become generally accepted. We can expect a tremendous revolution in that direction in modern scientific thought in the next century.

So, let me repeat the sentence which Swami Vivekananda uttered in the Chicago World Parliament of Religions in 1893 (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 1, p. 15). Welcoming the tremendous advances in modern science, Swamiji said,

'Manifestation, and not creation, is the word of science today, and the Hindu is only glad that what he has been cherishing in his bosom for ages is going to be taught in more forcible language, and with further light from the latest conclusions of science.'

We discovered these truths through our own spiritual experiences; they are discovering through real external investigation, from the known to the unknown. They are coming through sense-data, but reaching the same point. That is what is happening today to Vedanta versus modern science. It will take some more time; a lot of prejudice is there in scientific minds, just like the control of dogma in the human mind that you find in religion. Materialism is one such dogma bedevilling physical sciences. When this crude materialism is eliminated, some new developments will come. Religion will be recognized as a tremendous scientific discipline for human development and human fulfilment; that is what Vedanta developed ages ago.

So, one simple truth Śrī Kṛṣṇa has conveyed here: there is nothing supernatural in the whole thought of Vedanta, everything is natural, but natural from two dimensions—*aparā* and *parā*; and that is also one of the important convictions of physical science; physical science cannot tolerate anything supernatural; everything must be natural. And we accept it. Vedanta has nothing supernatural; everything is natural, but nature understood in its full connotation: *parā vidyā* and *aparā vidyā*, higher science and ordinary sciences; *parā Prakṛti* and *aparā Prakṛti* . If you accept both, then there is no problem so far as explaining the events of the universe is concerned.

That is the importance of these three verses in the seventh chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* . Similar things will come later in the 13th chapter also and, in the Upaniṣads, you have plenty of such passages. In Śaṅkarācārya's commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*, he begins with this statement, referred to earlier, that we are a combination of *cit* and *acit*, of *viṣayī* and *viṣaya*, 'of subject and object', and all *lokavyavahāra*, 'activity in the world', are based on this mix-up. Consciousness and dull dead matter are mixed up in our system; we have to separate them; we have to discriminate between one and the other. Sri Ramakrishna said: if you put sand and sugar together, the ant will come and take only the sugar, and separate the sand. The ant has the power of *viveka* or discrimination; we don't have that much discrimination; we need that discrimination today. So, in the first sentence itself, Śaṅkara refers to this natural state of the human mind: we mix up Consciousness and dull dead matter; we have to separate them and realize our own true nature

as that pure Consciousness. We are *nitya, śuddha, buddha, mukta svabhāva paramātman*, 'eternal, pure, enlightened and free Supreme Atman', that is our true nature, says Śaṅkarācārya in the above commentary. So, the commentary begins with the need for *jijñāsa* or investigation. Because *cit* and *jaḍa* have got mixed up, there is need for investigation. The *Brahma-Sutra* expression is *brahma jijñāsā , 'investigation into the nature of Brahman'. Why jijñāsā*? Because everything is mixed up. You need to investigate, question, enquire. So, in all departments of our life, there is need for investigation. There is so much of mix-up of things in the world. So, what is science? Investigation. Science investigates, discriminates and then says, 'this is the truth'.

So, this is the meaning of these wonderful early verses of the seventh chapter—*parā Prakṛti* and *aparā Prakṛti* constituting the total Reality of the universe. With that we can explain everything. That is how Śrī Kṛṣṇa expounds this great subject.

If you see a wave on the ocean, you can ask this question, 'What is this wave? It comes and goes.' By the time you say it is a wave, it has gone away; it has a particular name; it has a particular form; but what is the wave? The truth is, it is the ocean; the ocean and the wave. The wave came from the ocean, stayed for a second, and returned to the ocean. The ocean is the truth. The wave is only a manifestation of that ocean for a temporary period. So, that ultimate Reality of Brahman is the Truth of this universe. It has manifested itself as the universe of living and non-living beings, and these objects are nothing but the infinite one, from which the universe rises, stays for a time, and goes back again.

Taittirīya Upaniṣad—a very profound Upaniṣad we studied here two years ago—defines the truth of the word Brahman thus (III. i. 1): *Yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante* , 'from which these various beings and entities are born'; *yena jātāni jīvanti*, 'by which, when born, they live'; *yat prayanti abhisamviśanti*, 'and when they cease to exist, they go back to the same Reality; try to realize that Truth; that is Brahman.' That is the utterance; and Śaṅkara gives the most scientific definition of cause: 'cause is that from which the effect is never separated', either today, tomorrow, or yesterday—in the present, future or past. The whole universe is taken as one; Brahman

is that cause. So, we find Him at the time of manifestation; we find Him at the state of actual existence; we find Him again at the state of dissolution; that is the unchanging infinite Reality which appears in this gross form, and goes back to the original state. That is how Vedanta explains the nature of the ultimate Reality, which is of the nature of pure Consciousness, not just a lump of matter in its densest form, as modern cosmology tells us.

So, here is a beautiful idea which emerges when you study Vedanta from this point of view. Any subject which is studied by rational investigation, which is subject to questioning, which is subject to any amount of enquiry, that study alone has a scientific status. As soon as you put forth an idea, either you don't question it, or the idea is destroyed if you question it, in both these cases there is no science there. That is called dogma. No dogma can stand questioning; dogma is good for one's own private belief; keep it with you, don't question, and there is some place for it in human life.

Truths are things which shine; the more you question, the more they shine; just like gold, when put in fire, shines better and better. That is the closest approximation of scientific truth and Vedantic truth. Both are science; the only difference is you have got mathematics as essentially an integral part of physics and chemistry. But, in this science, mathematics has no place, what you call *quantity* has no place; we are dealing with *quality*; the higher the human being goes in evolution, the less becomes the place of mathematics. In any society, in any kind of study, quantitative measurement can be done only at very gross physical levels; at higher levels, quantity is displaced by quality; at the human level, quality is supreme; quantity has a place, but quality is supreme.

Now, this is also the conclusion of twentieth century biology; there is a lot of advancement in biology. When the Chicago University celebrated Darwin Centenary in 1959, there was a seven-day seminar on 'Events and Issues in Evolution–100 Years of Evolution'. There, speakers like Sir Julian Huxley spoke that, up to the human level, quantity was the criteria of evolution, but from the human level it is all quality. Quality enthroned over quantity; mind enthroned over matter; these are the words he has used. Now this has to become current coin in physical science and in our own

understanding. When that happens, these words of the *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads will become very luminous, becoming strengthened by the contribution of that wonderful discipline of the modern period, namely, physical science which Vedanta treats as a friend and not as an enemy, unlike Western religion which treated and still treats physical science as an enemy. Vedanta treats physical science, in fact any enquiry into the truth of things, as a friend, as a fellow seeker in the world of truth; that is how this idea is expressed. I am very happy to find that, as I said before, this idea is getting strengthened through the advances in modern neurology. Wait for another few decades; this will go onward, forward; more and more truths will be expounded from the physical side to confirm the truths expounded by spirituality through Vedanta.

In 1981, Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago held a public meeting to celebrate its golden jubilee; I was a speaker there along with that distinguished scientist and astrophysicist, Dr. Chandrasekhar of Chicago University. Dr. Chandrasekhar spoke on 'Search for Truth in Science', and I spoke on 'Search for Truth in Vedanta'. We had a large gathering at that time. The subject is so beautiful; both are search for truth, science at one level and Vedanta at another level. Dr. Chandrasekhar said frankly, 'I don't know anything about Vedanta; I know only my physics and my astrophysics and nothing else.' He was very open. But he found this subject also very interesting. 'I can't put it in my scientific language; my science cannot contain that thing', he admitted. My lecture has been brought out as a book by Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta. This will be the development in the next century; even in the remaining years of this century many more things will come to light.

So, the greatness of *Sanātana Dharma* based on this profound rational philosophy of Vedanta will be appreciated by the whole world in course of time. Swami Vivekananda has predicted that Vedanta will be the religion of thinking humanity in the future.

Posing the question how the West, which has undoubtedly been in the forefront of advance in several fields of knowledge from the time of the Greeks, could lag behind India in this field of inquiry these thousands of

years, Professor Max Muller answers (Three Lectures on the Vedanta Philosophy , London, 1894, p. 7):

‘But if it seems strange to you that the old Indian philosophers should have known more about the soul than Greek or medieval or modern philosophers, let us remember that however much the telescopes for observing the stars of heaven have been improved, the observatories of the soul have remained much the same.’

The *Gītā* will further strengthen this subject in its thirteenth chapter by using the terms *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* . *Kṣetra* means ‘the field’; *kṣetrajña* means ‘the Knower of the field’. The field alone is not enough; somebody who knows it is also needed. The word ‘field’ is today a very important word in quantum physics. The whole world is a field of energy. That field of energy is observed by a self-conscious *observer* . There you will get the second factor, which is coming more and more into modern science; and, as I said earlier, in the next few decades this investigation will become well established: that there is an observer along with the observed universe. And that observer is a unique entity; it is infinite in nature, though within the body it looks very finite, very limited. That is why in the Upaniṣads they made the equation ‘Atman is Brahman’. The Atman in you is the Atman of the universe; they are one and the same. Today, science, through neurology, will come to that conclusion when it begins to recognize the importance of the factor of consciousness or mind in our experience.

Having said this in verses 4 to 6, we go on to the 7th verse of the seventh chapter. Śrī Kṛṣṇa makes a great utterance here which has inspired our Indian thinking. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, identifying himself with that supreme Reality, uses the words, ‘I, therefore, exist in all things’. We are limited; we are separate from each other, but *Bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa can say that He exists in all things. Therefore he said:

मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्किञ्चिदस्ति धनञ्जय ।
मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ॥७॥

Mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcidasti dhanañjaya;
Mayi sarvamidam protam sūtre maṇigaṇā iva — 7. 7

‘Beyond me, O Dhanañjaya (Arjuna), there is nothing higher. All this is strung in Me, like a row of pearls on a thread.’

A very profound verse. There is nothing higher than Myself, that ultimate Reality, the infinite pure Consciousness, which you call Brahman. There is nothing *parataram* , ‘superior’, ‘higher’; *na anyat kiñcit asti* , ‘there is nothing other than that Reality’. That is why, in the beginning of the chapter, he said: ‘I am going to tell you of the totality of the Reality; nothing outside of it is there’. That consists of these two factors—object and subject or *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* , ‘the known and the knower’, or, as we say in physics, quantum phenomena and its observer. Therefore, this unity is the ultimate, beyond which there is nothing; *mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcit asti dhanañjaya*, ‘nothing else exists superior to or beyond Me, O Arjuna’. The next line is marvellous: *mayi sarvam idam protam sūtre maṇigaṇā iva* , ‘the whole universe is strung in Me like pearls in a string’; that string runs through all the pearls to make a garland. You cannot see the string; you see only the pearls. That ‘string’ is Me, the *antaryāmi* , ‘the one that is in the heart of all things’, extremely subtle, not visible to the senses.

So, *mayi sarvamidam protam; idam* mean ‘this’, this manifested universe; *sarvam* means ‘all’. We have this teaching in Vedanta and that makes a tremendous difference. The universal outlook of Indian culture comes from this teaching. We can see a human being from outside; you can judge him or her from his or her colour or height; many other variable attributes of individuals are there. They are all visible, but there is one invariable invisible attribute in all individuals in the world. What is that? The thread that runs through all of them, the Divine Inner Self; there we are all one. So, judge a person from that point of view.

That truth came to India very early in our cultural history—the ancient period characterized by the universality of our culture and outlook. Throughout the ages, we produced outstanding sages and thinkers, who applied this idea of universality, non-separateness. We are all separate from the sensory point of view, but deep down we are all one. That is the *Advaitic vision* that came to us very early in history. That made India a land of universal sympathy, a land of toleration and understanding. We cannot sufficiently thank these great sages who gave such a profound vision to the

people belonging to not a tiny island, but to the subcontinent of this great country. And today, the world is searching for this very vision of human unity and harmony.

Mayi , 'in Me'; *sarvam idam protam sūtre maṇigaṇā iva. Maṇi* means 'gem' or pearl; *maṇigaṇā iva*, 'like so many pieces of gems', 'all strung together as a garland on a thread'. *Sūtra* in Sanskrit means 'thread'. The divine Reality is called by various names like *sūtrātman , antarātman , antaryāmin*, etc.; the one inside all. We are all separate, but the thread unites all of us. In the political language we say, we are all separate, but as citizens of India we are all one, belonging to one republican state. Otherwise, physically speaking, we are all separate. This was a profound discovery you find in the Upaniṣads. One of the great passages of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, in its *Antaryāmi Brāhmaṇa*, is on the Supreme Divine as the *antaryāmin*, 'the inner Self of all', regulating everything from within. Take a cell; what regulates a cell? Something from within itself. You are trying to find out what is that thing. In genetics, we say it is DNA, RNA. These are all observable phenomena; but go deeper, still deeper if you can, and you will really find nothing but the divine as the inner energy that manipulates the processes in that living cell, in this body, in this universe, everywhere; that is the one ultimate Reality. That is the idea that Śrī Kṛṣṇa expresses here in a small verse.

In the *Antaryāmi Brāhmaṇa* (III. vii. 3), this idea is stated in a whole para; its first line is:

> *Yaḥ pṛthivyām tiṣṭhan pṛthivyā antaraḥ, yam pṛthivī na veda, yasya pṛthivī śarīram, yaḥ pṛthivīm antaro yamayati, eṣa te ātmā antaryāmi amṛtaḥ —*

Very majestic utterance Yājñavalkya makes here:

'He who exists in the earth, but is within it, whom the earth does not know, whose body is the earth, who remaining in the earth regulates all the activities in the earth, that is the *antaryāmi*, that is the immortal Self'.

Every other aspect of the earth is mortal; but this one thing inside is its immortal dimension. Similarly, the example of *vāyu* or air and of other things are taken, and finally, the last line (ibid, III. vii. 15): *yaḥ sarveṣu*

bhūteṣu tiṣṭhan, ‘one who exists in all beings’, ‘that which though existing in all beings, they don’t know Him, who, sitting within, regulates all beings’; *eṣa te ātmā antaryāmi amṛtaḥ* , ‘this is your Atman, the *antaryāmin*, inner Self, *amṛtaḥ*, the immortal one.’

That is the famous *Antaryāmi brāhmaṇa* of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. Śaṅkara’s commentary on these passages is marvellous. Such deep penetration you will find there in simple beautiful Sanskrit prose. This passage is highly prized by the next Vedantic teacher, Rāmānujācārya, expounder of Vedanta in its Viśiṣṭādvaitic form.

You get in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (4.3), a beautiful statement, when the sage discovered this truth within, and, when he looked around, he found that infinite Reality is also there in every being, and declared:

Tvam strī tvam pumān asi tvam kumāra uta vā kumārī;
Tvam jīrṇo daṇḍena vañcasi tvam jāto bhavasi viśvato mukhaḥ —

Tvam strī, ‘you are the woman’; *tvam pumān asi*, ‘you are the man’; *tvam kumāra*, ‘you are the boy’; *uta vā kumārī*, ‘as well as a *kumārī*, a girl’; *tvam jīrṇo daṇḍena vañcasi*, ‘you are also the old man tottering on a stick’; *tvam jāto bhavasi viśvatomukhaḥ*, ‘you are manifest in this universe in millions of forms’. It is all You that we find in all of them; that is the highest vision expressed in spiritual poetry.

In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* passage (II.ii.7) you find this idea: a sage discovered that Atman within himself and he looked out and he found the same Atman everywhere. So, he described it as *ānandarūpam amṛtam yat vibhāti*, ‘of the nature of infinite bliss, immortal, that manifests in everything in the world around you’. The word kavi or poet, in Sanskrit, is also the name for God. God is described as *kavi*. In the *Gītā* (8. 9), you will get it: *kavim purāṇam anuśāsitāram*, ‘God is the *kavi*, the supreme poet, he can see far ahead’. Śaṅkara’s definition of *kavi* is: *krānta darṣī*, ‘one who can see far away and ahead’. Such a person is called *kavi* and that is why we respect poets and their poetry. The higher the poet, the deeper is his or her penetration into human experience and the way he or she communicates the same thing. I like that particular verse in English, characterizing the greatness of Shakespeare. Why is Shakespeare so much respected? All over

the world people study him. Even now, after 500 years, we study him; we enact his dramas, we quote his words, some of the most precious expressions you get in Shakespearean literature. What is the speciality about Shakespeare? Someone has put it into a small verse. It says:

The poem hangs on the berry bush,
when comes the poet's eye;
The street begins to masquerade
when Shakespeare passes by.

There is also Shakespeare's own poem about the poet (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, vol. 2):

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
doth glance from heaven to earth,
from earth to heaven,
and as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown,
the poet's pen turns them to shapes
and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

So, we need to develop a little bit of that poetic vision. God is the supreme Poet and these poets have got a bit of that poetic vision of the Divine. The greater the poet, the more he or she will be taken up into that Divine vision. This is what we understand in India. The Upaniṣads themselves call God Kavi or Poet.

In the coming decades, we will be getting more and more of reconfirmation of this profound vision of the Vedic sages, and that is what is the current thought tendency today. It never becomes old, is always fresh. Truth is never old; truth is always fresh. If there is a dogma or a creed, that is at some later time thrown away as absurd, as being not at all relevant; it has then no currency value; but truth is always the same, universal. This is how the Vedas discovered some profound truths about human beings and the universe. When you speak of Veda, it means a set of knowledge discovered by profound investigation into the heart of human beings and the world. The sages discovered these truths and proclaimed them, and they are

still current after four to five thousand years. These truths are always there; so, we gave it the name *Sanātana Dharma*, Eternal Dharma; it is called Perennial Philosophy by Aldous Huxley in his book of that name.

Now Śrī Kṛṣṇa goes on to expound this beautiful truth: in what way He is present in everything in this universe? A few samples are given in this chapter. A few more are given in the 10th chapter, called *Vibhūti Yoga, Bhagavān's vibhūti* or powers. He is present in all the manifested universe. So, a few samples of that presence is given in the present chapter from verse 8:

रसोऽहमप्सु कौन्तेय प्रभाऽस्मि शशिसूर्ययोः ।
प्रणवः सर्ववेदेषु शब्दः खे पौरुषं नृषु ॥८॥

Raso'hamapsu kaunteya prabhā'smi śaśisūryayoḥ;
Praṇavaḥ sarvavedeṣu śabdaḥ khe pauruṣam nṛṣu — 7. 8

'I am the sapidity in water, O son of Kuntī; I am the radiance in the moon and the sun; I am Om in all the Vedas, sound in *Ákāśa*, and manhood in men (or humanity).'

Rasaḥ aham apsu, 'I am the sapidity in water'; *rasaḥ*, means 'taste'. *Rasaḥ*, in Sanskrit, is a word with different meanings according to context. Its most important meaning is aesthetic delight associated with drama, poetry, music, and spiritual delight, especially in the path of *bhakti* or devotion to the Personal aspect of the Impersonal-Personal God. Secondly, *prabhā'smi śaśisūryayoḥ*, 'I am the radiance in the moon and the sun'; *praṇavaḥ sarva vedeṣu*, 'among all the Vedas I am the *Omkāra* or *praṇava* '; *śabda khe*, 'in *ākāśa* or space, I am sound'; sound is propagated through space and there I am the sound; *pauruṣam nṛṣu* , 'among human beings I am that *pauruṣa*, that kind of strength and manliness, courage, etc.'; and in anybody who has this, know that a touch of the Divine is there. That idea Śri Kṛṣṇa will say later on in another great verse (10. 41).

And then:

पुण्यो गन्धः पृथिव्यां च तेजश्चास्मि विभावसौ ।
जीवनं सर्वभूतेषु तपश्चास्मि तपस्विषु ॥९॥

Puṇyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyām ca tejaścāsmi vibhāvasau;
Jīvanam sarvabhūteṣu tapaścāsmi tapasviṣu — 7. 9

'I am the sweet fragrance in earth, and the brilliance in the fire am I; the life in all beings, and the austerity am I in ascetics.'

Puṇyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyām ca *, 'I am in the earth in the form of auspicious smell'; 'in the earth the principle is* gandhaḥ *, good smell';* puṇyo gandhaḥ *, 'very auspicious smell';* tejaścāsmi vibhāvasau *, 'in fire I am brilliance',* tejas *; then,* jīvanam sarvabhūteṣu, *'among all beings, I am the principle of life, principle of intelligence'; and,* tapaścāsmi tapasviṣu *, 'among those who are practising* tapas *, I am the very principle of* tapas *or austerity', that inspires one to practise* tapas *to achieve great things.*

बीजं मां सर्वभूतानां विद्धि पार्थ सनातनम् ।
बुद्धिर्बुद्धिमतामस्मि तेजस्तेजस्विनामहम् ॥१०॥

Bījam mām sarvabhūtānām viddhi pārtha sanātanam;
Buddhirbuddhimatāmasmi tejastejasvināmaham — 7. 10

'Know me, O son of Pṛthā, as the eternal seed of all beings. I am the intellect of the intelligent, and the heroism of the heroic.'

Sanātanam bījam, *'eternal seed';* mām viddhi, *'know Me';* pārtha sarva bhūtānām *, 'of all beings, O Arjuna';* buddhiḥ buddhimatām asmi *, 'among intelligent people, I am the very principle of intelligence';* tejaḥ tejasvinām aham *, 'among the brilliant or heroic people, I am their brilliance or heroism'. In that way, we can feel the presence of God, as expressed in Vedanta, in the manifested universe. Thus, not only is He transcendental, He is also immanent.*

बलं बलवतामस्मि कामरागविवर्जितम् ।
धर्माविरुद्धो भूतेषु कामोऽस्मि भरतर्षभ ॥११॥

Balam balavatām cāham kāma rāga vivarjitam;
Dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kāmo'smi bharatarṣabha — 7. 11

'Of the strong, I am the strength devoid of sensual desire and attachment. I am, O bull among the Bharatas, that sensual desire in beings

unopposed to Dharma .'

Balam balavatām cāham , 'I am the strength in those who have strength', but with this qualification—kāma rāga vivarjitam , 'free from sensory craving and attachment'; that strength that makes for the good of the people, that makes people elevated, I am that strength in such people. The next statement is also very remarkable: dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kāmaḥ asmi bharatarṣabha. Kāma or sensory craving, is a habit of animals and humans; that kāma is usually condemned in all ascetic type of books, but not in Vedanta, not in Sanātana Dharma and not in the *Gītā* . Kāma has been given a high place. And in this case Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'I am that kāma in all beings which is unopposed to dharma '. 'I am that kāma which doesn't destroy other peoples' welfare'. Therefore, kāma has been given a very high status, but that must be a very disciplined type of kāma that doesn't destroy other peoples' enjoyment of the good things of the world. Dharmāviruddho kāma , 'desire unopposed to dharma '.

Then,

ये चैव सात्त्विका भावा राजसास्तामसाश्च ये ।
मत्त एवेति तान्विद्धि न त्वहं तेषु ते मयि ॥१२॥

Ye caiva sāttvikā bhāvā rājasāḥ tāmasāḥ ca ye;
Matta eveti tānviddhi na tvaham teṣu te mayi — 7. 12

'And whatever states pertaining to *sattva*, and those pertaining to *rajas* and to *tamas* are there, know them to proceed from Me alone; still I am not in them, but they are in Me.'

This is a very remarkable verse where Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *ye ca eva sāttvikā bhāvā rājasāḥ tāmasāḥ ca ye*, 'Whatever states, pertaining to *sattva, rajas* and *tamas'; matta eveti tān viddhi*, 'know that every one of them has come from Me only', even the *tāmasik* state comes only from Me. For example, when we are sleepy and yawning, you can see plenty of *tamas* there. We don't condemn it. This is a part of our life; it also comes from the Divine. So, *rajas, tamas* and *sattva*, all these, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *matta eveti tān viddhi*, 'know that they have come from Me only'; but, *na tvaham teṣu*, 'I am not in

them', I am not imprisoned in them, but they have come from Me; *te mayi*, 'they are in Me'.

This is the language. God projects the universe out of Himself. The universe is of many varieties, and good and bad are also there in the universe; and so too, God is in the Universe. The universe is also in God, but God is not in the universe in the sense of being caught up there. He is ever free. He cannot be caught up in anything. Just like space which cannot be caught up in a pot, or in a building; it comes out of all this, as it is ever free; similarly is the Divine.

And with the next *śloka* begins the treatment of the subject of *māyā*, that these three *guṇas* constitute *māyā*, which is the cause of the manifestation of the One as the many:

त्रिभिर्गु;णमयैर्भावैरेभि: सर्वमिदं जगत् ।
मोहितं नाभिजानाति मामेभ्य: परमव्ययम् ॥१३॥

Tribhirguṇamayairbhāvaiḥ ebhiḥ sarvamidam jagat;
Mohitam nābhijānāti mām ebhyaḥ param avyayam — 7. 13

'Deluded by these states, (which are) the modifications of the three *Guṇas* (of *Prakṛti*), all this world does not know Me who is beyond them, and is immutable.'

Tribhiḥ guṇamayaiḥ, 'this whole universe is constituted of the three *guṇas'—sattva , rajas* and *tamas; ebhiḥ sarvam idam jagat mohitam*, 'by these all this world is deluded'; *nābhijānāti*, people in the world are deluded by these three *guṇas*, and 'therefore they don't know Me', as existing in the *guṇas*, as the very soul of all these. They are carried away by the *guṇas*; so, they are not able to see Me who is within the *guṇas*. This Divine Consciousness is ever free there. *Mohitam*, 'because they are deluded'; *nābhijānāti mām*, 'they don't understand Me'; *ebhyaḥ param*, 'superior to all these', above all these; and, *avyayam*, 'imperishable', is My nature; that one infinite Reality has become manifested as this universe. How?, through these three *guṇas*.

Some of the statements in Sāṅkhya philosophy and some of the statements in the *Gītā* look so alike. Indian cosmology tells us that when

these three *guṇas* are in a uniform state, absolutely inactive, that is a state when the world doesn't exist separately. Then, a little disturbance takes place in these *guṇas*, and it becomes diverse. From that time manifestation begins; then permutation and combination of the three *guṇas* occurs, and the whole universe comes out of that. The ground material, Brahman, is the infinite Consciousness behind the three *guṇas*. So, all over the universe that Consciousness is there, but this medium of the three *guṇas* deludes the human mind and makes it unable to know Me, the supreme imperishable Reality, *mohitam nābhijānāti mām ebhyaḥ param avyayam. Ebhyaḥ param*, I am 'beyond all these'; I am the *avyaya; vyaya* means expenditure, *avyaya* means non-expenditure, i.e. ever the same; that's My true nature.

Having said this, now comes a tremendous statement which has been often quoted by spiritual teachers in India all these centuries; that is verse 14.

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।
मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥१४॥

Daivī hyeṣā guṇamayī mama māyāduratyayā;
Māmeva ye prapadyante māyām etām taranti te — 7. 14

'Verily, this *māyā* of Mine, constituted of the *guṇas*, is difficult to cross over; those who devote themselves to Me alone, cross over this illusion.'

This *māyā* constituted of the three *guṇas*, He says, is divine; *daivī hyeṣā*, 'this (*Māyā*) is divine', belonging to the Lord Himself; *duratyayā*, 'difficult to cross', difficult to overcome. Once you are caught in *Māyā* , it is very difficult to escape from this *Māyā*; that is the nature of *Māyā* . That is a remarkable statement in the *bhakti* religion. If you ask, 'how the One became the many?', the answer is, 'through *Māyā* '. One has not become the many, and yet the many is there. In all these, you will find the One. Even now it is all that One only, behind all this diversity. As Swami Vivekananda said in his *Jñāna* Yoga lectures in England, '*Māyā* is not a theory. *Māyā* is a simple statement of facts, what we are and what we see around us.' We feel we are free, but we cannot express that freedom. This *Māyā* comes in between. Everywhere you see *Māyā* working. The whole

manifested universe is in *Māyā*. Therefore, this is the Divine *Śakti*. We call it the *Śakti* of Brahman. Brahman and *Śakti* are identical.

In Sri Ramakrishna's teachings this has been so beautifully explained. It is a great help to our practical life. Everything is in *Māyā* , but *Māyā* has two dimensions; one is called Avidyā *Māyā* , the other is called *Vidyā Māyā* —*Māyā* of ignorance, and *Māyā* of knowledge. The first *Māyā* drags us down, towards the sensory level and even further down; that's called *Avidyā Māyā* . All the evils you find in society, all crimes, all corruption, they have come from the predominance of *Avidyā Māyā*. As soon as *Vidyā Māyā* sets in, you become pure, you become moral, you become ethical, you become concerned with others; high character comes; that is called *Vidyā Māyā*. So, both are within *Māyā* , the good life and the bad life. Both are in *Māyā* , but it is human responsibility to cultivate *Vidyā Māyā* within oneself in place of *Avidyā Māyā*. You have the freedom; animals have not that freedom; every man or woman has that freedom. If you don't exercise that freedom to change from *Avidyā Māyā* to *Vidyā Māyā* , your life will be a failure; you become caught up in this net of *Māyā* .

Daivī hyeṣā guṇamayī, 'composed of the *guṇas* is this divine Śakti '; *mama māyā*, 'my *Māyā* '; *duratyayā*, 'difficult to cross', difficult to overcome. But you can overcome it. How? *Mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etām taranti te*, 'those alone cross it who take refuge only in Me', whose *Māyā* is this. People are unable to overcome this tyranny of *Māyā*. Take refuge in the Lord whose *Māyā* this world is; then you can become capable of overcoming it. So there is *Māyā* , and the Lord lies above *Māyā* , as the *māyāvī*, 'the controller of *Māyā* '.

Sri Ramakrishna says very beautifully, 'when you see a magic—you have magic shows here several times—you are fascinated. You think it is all real, absolutely real and you are deluded by the *Māyā*. But look at the magician, watch him. Then you will find this *Māyā* is his magic only; it is all magic; it is not real. So, when you concentrate on the magic, you are caught. When you concentrate on the Magician, you are never caught. That is what is expressed in the passage: *mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etām taranti te*, 'you are able to cross over this *Māyā* by the help of that to whom the *Māyā* belongs'. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here. In all our *Purāṇas* you

will find this wonderful idea of *Māyā* by which people are deluded, and some people get rid of this *Māyā* through *bhakti* , through *jñāna*, through developing this spiritual awareness of the Divine.

So, this is a truth about the human being: why did I do this evil? Why do I do that good? *Māyā* is working in me: one to pull me down, one to push me up; both are *Māyā* . When you go and kill somebody, that is *Māyā*. When you go and save somebody, that too is *Māyā* ; but this latter is a divine *Māyā* , *Vidyā Māyā*, 'knowledge *Māyā* '. The other is *Avidyā Māyā*, '*Māyā* of ignorance'; that pulls you down. So, in this way, human choice is there to make one's heart the playground of either *Avidyā Māyā* or *Vidyā Māyā*. Everybody should realize this truth that it depends upon me and nobody else. 'I want to convert my heart into a place for *Vidyā Māyā*. ' Yes, you can do it. Or, if you are satisfied with *Avidyā Māyā*; you continue there. In this way, everyone has the freedom to remain in or to overcome this *Māyā* .

People, all over the world, are not afraid that the sun may move from its location because it is absolutely fixed there. Everything in the world is fixed, deterministic, but in the human being alone is that freedom to escape from *Māyā* , to realize what is beyond *Māyā*. When you start exercising that freedom, you will see a new aspect of *Māyā*, *Vidyā Māyā*, the uplifting aspect of *Māyā* , which is more luminous, with more of the *sāttvik* element. *Tamas* pushes you down; *rajas*, more or less, keeps you down; but when *sattva* becomes predominant, you start living freely, you slowly become free. *Sattva* is also *Māyā* , but it is a *Māyā* which helps you to get rid of *Māyā* .

Sri Ramakrishna tells: 'when a thorn enters your foot, you take another thorn, remove it and throw both the thorns away.' So, if *Māyā* has caught you, then what will you do? You take one aspect of that *Māyā*, i.e. *sattva*, and remove this evil, the *rajas* and *tamas*, and then throw that *sattva* also away. *Sattva* also must be given up; it is relativity; it is not the highest. That is why beyond the *guṇas* is the Divine; *sattva* is only the highest part of this *Māyā* system.

So, there are many stories in our *Puraṇas* about this *sattva*— how this *sattva* can help us to overcome this *Māyā* by cultivating it in our mind. And

rajas keeps you intensively active and tied to the world; *tamas* makes you wicked and lazy as well. So, wherever there is a predominance of *tamas* , you will find a lower level of life. Then comes *rajas* —activity, energy, but very often selfish, self-centred, etc. Then a little *sattva* enters—high character, and concern for others come; energy is still there, but purified energy—energy working for the good of all, that is called *sāttvic* energy. In this way, we can manipulate the energies of *Māyā*; we can do it ourselves. When we do so, we start evolving upwards. At a particular stage in our life, we get the capacity to go beyond *Māyā* and realize that Divine which is behind all this *Māyā* . That is freedom, absolute freedom for human beings. But *Māyā* is difficult to cross, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā*, 'difficult to cross is My *Māyā* consisting of *guṇas*'.

There are many stories told about this *Māyā* and its power to delude man or woman; and some of them are very fascinating from this point of view. Sri Ramakrishna tells one such story. Nārada, the great sage, is ever free, ever pure, almost like a messenger of God. But, Nārada told Śrī Kṛṣṇa one day, 'I want to see what is Your *Māyā* . I want to experience it a little.' Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, 'Don't try it; it is very dangerous. Once you try to experience it, you will be caught in it. It is a very difficult thing.' Exactly the same language as used here—*mama māyā duratyayā*. But, Nārada was really very anxious. They were both walking in a field. At that time, when Nārada pressed Śrī Kṛṣṇa for the experience, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, 'Okay, you can have a little experience of *Māyā*. ' A little later Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, 'Nārada, I am very thirsty. I want a glass of water. Go to the neighbouring village and get me a glass of water.' Nārada went to the village and to a particular house in that village. A young daughter of that family brought a glass of water to Nārada. Nārada looked at her. Suddenly he became fascinated by her. Then he spoke to the father of that girl, 'Can I marry this girl?' 'Of course, we shall arrange a marriage for you', said the father. And so, Nārada married that girl, set up a family, children were born to them. After some time, a flood came; one by one the children were carried away; even the house was swept away. And the last one, his wife, with great difficulty was holding on; even she was carried away. Nārada was in great distress, in great sorrow. Just then somebody tapped on his back: 'Nārada, where is my water?' 'What? Water?', asked Nārada. 'For the past half an hour I am

waiting for a glass of water,' said Śrī Kṛṣṇa. 'Half an hour! A whole life has passed here. I have had enough. No more do I want to see Your *Māyā*, ' said Nārada. Now, if a highly spiritual Nārada can come into such a difficulty, how true is the statement *duratyayā mama māyā*, 'My *Māyā* is difficult to overcome'. Try to overcome it, try to go beyond it, that is the real and right endeavour.

That story is so far as Nārada is concerned. But once the Lord Himself came into trouble! That is another story of Sri Ramakrishna. When Lord Viṣṇu incarnated as a boar to lift the earth, he finished his work; the earth was lifted, but he continued to be in the boar's body! He found it very pleasant. He had a boar wife; he had children, and very fine they were. So, he remained in that boar body. And the gods became frightened: 'What has happened to Lord Viṣṇu? He is no more in *Vaikuṇṭha*, the highest heaven of Viṣṇu.' So, they went to Lord Śiva and prayed, 'Please remove this delusion from him; let him give up his boar body and come back to >*Vaikuṇṭha*.' So, Śiva told Viṣṇu, 'Your work is over, throw away this body and come.' 'No, no, I am quite okay', said Viṣṇu, and with a grunt he went away to another side. 'I am very happy here. What is the matter? Absolutely pleasant; there is no problem.' Then, Śiva said to himself, 'It is a serious matter. Viṣṇu took on the body of the boar and now he is attached to it, and he is feeling very pleasant!' So, Śiva found Viṣṇu is really in difficulty now. What did he do? He took his trident and pierced it through that body. As soon as the body was broken, Viṣṇu came out laughing and said, 'Ah, how did I get caught up in this? I didn't know that I was really caught up in this boar body.' Then he came back to his own *Vaikuṇṭha*.

The story, when I read for the first time, made me amused. But later, I saw the truth of it. One day, I found a huge pig lying on the pavement side, very happily snoring, pig children were drinking its milk, seven or eight of them drinking the milk of their mother, and she was very happy and very peaceful. Then I could see, what Lord Viṣṇu said was correct. In that body there is immense joy and pleasure.

Now, these stories tell us this fact: that *Māyā* is a reality of experience; it is very difficult to get rid of it, but, by effort and struggle, we can overcome *Avidyā Māyā* by *Vidyā Māyā* , and *Vidyā Māyā* will be overcome

by itself. Thus we will go beyond *Māyā*. That is the possibility for all people. If that is so, we have to transcend *sattva , rajas* and *tamas*— we have to rise from *tamas* to *rajas*, from *rajas* to *sattva* , then go beyond *sattva* also; *sattva* also is to be overcome.

To illustrate that, Sri Ramakrishna narrates another beautiful parable. A person was going through the forest. Suddenly, three robbers came upon him and tied him hand and foot; they robbed him. The three robbers are *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*. Then one of the robbers said, 'Why leave him? We shall kill him and go away'. That is called *tamas. Tamas* said this, 'Let us finish with him.' Then one of the other two robbers said, 'Why kill him? We have already robbed him. Let us tie him hand and foot, leave him here, and go away.' *Rajas* said this. And so all of them went away leaving him in that condition. After some time, the third robber, *sattva*, came to him and said, 'So sorry, you have suffered so much.' He removed his bondages and released him. He said, 'Come, go to your house, I will show you the way.' He took him towards his town and showed him, 'There is your house. You go that way. You are free.' Then this man said, 'You have been so kind to me. Please come with me. I will entertain you in my house.' That robber said, 'I can't come. I am also under police's surveillance. I am also a thief, but I can show you your house.' And therefore, this robber, *sattva*, went away after showing him the goal.

That is what Sri Ramakrishna said. *Tamas* does lot of harm, *rajas* also does lot of *harm, sattva* releases you from the bondage. But *sattva* is not the highest state; it can only point out where the highest Reality is. You go there yourself. So, go beyond the *guṇas*. So, in the *Gītā* we read earlier (2.45) *nistraiguṇyo bhavārjuna*, 'Arjuna, go beyond the three *guṇas*, to that very high state of mind.' It is very good to proceed in that direction.

So, this subject of *Māyā* comes again and again in our literature, not only in the path of *jñāna*, but also in the path of *bhakti* . In the *Śrimad Bhāgavatam* (XI. iii. 1) you will find this passage: *parasya viṣṇoḥ īśasya māyināṁ api mohinīm māyām*, 'that *Māyā* , the divine power of the supreme Lord Mahāviṣṇu, which can delude the minds of others'. People do this, people do that. All this is the play of *Māyā*, in you and in me; that is a fact. But, as I said again and again, we are not entirely subject to this *Māyā*

. We can free ourselves from it. We are essentially Divine. We have the freedom, only we don't exercise it; we don't struggle. When we struggle, we become a playground of Vidyā *Māyā*, instead of *Avidyā Māyā* . Sri Ramakrishna wants people to understand this truth and set about freeing themselves from that negative *Māyā* so that the positive *Māyā* will take them beyond this *Māyā* itself. This is our own responsibility and our privilege; no animal can do it, only the human being can do it. So, that is the importance of the *śloka* 14.

'Those who take refuge in Me, they go beyond all this *Māyā* ; they become free'. In *bhakti* path, there is the spirit of resignation to God, surrender to God. What a wonderful idea! And many had become free through that type of *bhakti* experience—Christian devotees, Sufi devotees, Buddhists, Hindus, all. In every religion you will find that those who became free from *māyā* by their own efforts finally depended on the Divine grace that came upon the individual at a particular moment of his or her life. So, this is the importance of *śloka* 14 of chapter seven. Then,

न मां दुष्कृतिनो मूढाः प्रपद्यन्ते नराधमाः ।
माययाऽपहृतज्ञाना आसुरं भावमाश्रिताः ॥१५॥

Na mām duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ prapadyante narādhamāḥ;
Māyayā apahṛtajñānā āsuram bhāvamāśritāḥ — 7. 15

'They do not devote themselves to Me—the evil-doers, the deluded, the lowest of men, deprived of discrimination by *māyā*, and following the way of the Asuras or evildoers.'

Why do not people overcome this *Māyā? Na mām prapadyante*, 'because such people do not come to Me, do not devote themselves to Me'. Who? Duṣkṛtino , 'those who do evil deeds', they are so deep in *Māyā* , they can't even think of anything better; mūḍhāḥ, 'those who are deluded'. They are fools but they think they are intelligent. Actually they are fools subject to this blinding effect of *māyā; narādhamāḥ* , 'they are the worst among men and women'. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says further: *māyayā apahṛtajñānā*, 'their understanding has been completely carried away by the power of *Māyā* '; then, *āsuram bhāvam āśritāḥ*, 'they depend upon the *asura's*

qualities of wickedness'. In chapter sixteen, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will give us a list of *āsurī* qualities, *āsurī sampat*, while discussing *daivī sampat* or divine qualities versus *āsurī sampat*. What a beautiful classification! There are people who have so many *daivī sampat* in them: compassion, love and concern for others, ever trying to help—that is called *daivī sampat*. The other is *āsurī sampat*: trying to trouble people, exploit them, destroy them, that is called *āsurī sampa*t ; both are there. So, these people, who are not devoted to the indwelling God, belong to the *āsurī* class.

Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks in the next verse 16: Four types of people worship Me. This āsurī type, mentioned above, will not worship Me; they are satisfied with that *Māyā* in which they live. They are happy in it. But most human beings who worship God belong to four categories. This is also a fine classification in the *Gītā* :

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जना: सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन ।
आर्तो जिज्ञासुरर्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ॥१६॥

Caturvidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtino'rjuna;
Árto jijñāsuḥ arthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha — 7. 16

'Four kinds of virtuous human beings worship Me, O Arjuna—the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth, and the spiritually wise, O bull (greatest) among the Bharatas.'

Caturvidhā, 'four types (of people)'; *bhajante mām*, 'worship Me'; *janāḥ sukṛtino'rjuna*, 'those who are virtuous, O Arjuna'. The other is *duṣkṛtinaḥ*, 'vicious', mentioned in the previous *śloka*. But here we are talking about those who are *sukṛtinaḥ*, 'those who do virtuous deeds'. Among them also there is a classification. What is that? They are of four types: *Ártaḥ jijñāsuḥ arthārthī jñānī ca* : One is *ārtaḥ*, 'one who is in trouble, in difficulty'. Whenever we are in trouble, we think of God; and even that is good. At least the mind goes to something higher, beyond this *Māyā*. *Ártiḥ* is the word meaning 'suffering, trouble, tension'. So, when we are in *ārtiḥ*, then we think of God. That is one way of thinking of God, one motivation for thinking of God. Second is *jijñāsuḥ*, 'seeker of knowledge'. 'I want to know.' A seeker also is a devotee; the seeker of knowledge is a

devotee of the Divine. Next is *arthārthī*, 'people in search of wealth'; such a person also thinks of God, though they are all of the worldly category, yet it doesn't matter. They are slowly connecting themselves from *Avidyā Māyā* to *Vidyā Māyā* . So, this little movement upwards must be encouraged. These are the first three: *ārtaḥ jijñāsuḥ arthārthī*. This only shows the highly generous character of the Teacher and His teaching that is given here. Then, *jñānī ca*, the last is *jñānī*, 'the spiritual seeker and knower', the wonderful human being who loves God for love's sake. He or she knows fully the nature of the Divine; his or her whole heart is given to the Divine. Such a person is called a *jñānī* .

Here *jñānī* includes also *bhakta*. The highest *jñāna* and the highest *bhakti* are the same, perfectly free from the clutches of *Māyā*. Therefore, the word *jñāna* is used here not in the usual technical sense, but in the general sense. These are the four types of devotees of the Divine.

In the *Srīmad Bhāgavatam*, in the eleventh book, there is one famous *śloka* (XI. xx. 8). How does a man become God's devotee? There Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: By chance, a very worldly person heard a talk about the Divine, and a little interest in God grew in him or her at that time. He or she is still very attached to the world, attached to power or money, etc. But a little love of God entered into the mind. He or she has not the spirit of renunciation, but he or she is not over-attached also to the world. Such a person is a candidate to the path of *bhākti* :

Yadṛcchayā matkathādau
jātaśraddhastu yaḥ pumān;
Na nirviṇṇo nātisakto
bhaktiyogo'sya siddhidaḥ —

Bhakti Yoga leads one to the highest perfection! How? *Yadṛcchayā matkathādau jātaśraddhaḥ*, 'by chance, going on the road, he or she hears there is a talk going on, or a *bhajan* going on. He or she just enters the place and hears the spiritual talk without any particular objective. Some higher thought arises in his or her mind; a little spiritual awakening, a little spiritual feeling'. That person has started his or her march on the path of *bhakti* . Such a person, who is still full of worldly attachment, has very little renunciation, but still he or she has entered that path of *bhakti* which will

take him or her finally to realization. Even *yadṛcchayā*; the word *yadṛcchā* is very important, 'by chance'. Sometimes, in an unplanned way you get spiritual inspiration. So many stories are there how lives were changed by some chance experiences.

There is the story of the father of poet Rabindranath Tagore, namely, Debendranath Tagore. He was a good scholar and a very rich zamindar. He was just sitting—he tells in his autobiography—I think, in Darjeeling or in his estate enjoying the quiet evening. A wind brought a small piece of paper towards his feet. He just picked up that paper, read in it something which turned out to be the famous first verse of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*. He read it, became inspired by it, and his whole life changed. What was that verse?

Īśāvāsyam idam sarvam yatkiñca jagatyām jagat;
Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā mā gṛdhaḥ kasyasviddhanam —

'Everything in the manifested universe should be filled with the divine.' This is the first line. This inspired him to conduct further studies. And he gave that Vedic background to the Brahmo Samaj Movement of Calcutta of which he was a leader of that time after the death of Raja Rammohan Roy whom he had helped in founding the movement. That is the story of Debendranath Tagore. There are many further instances of this *yadṛcchayā matkathādau jātaśraddhaḥ* —by chance you hear a story about the Divine and faith in the Divine is born in you. Then something stirs in your mind. You never expected it before, you never sought it, and yet it came. That puts you on the road of *bhakti* . With that *bhakti* you go step by step to the highest level of spiritual development.

Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that among these four categories, the *jñāni*, the fourth one, is something special. He or she loves God in spirit and in truth. That is why that person is the highest. In the next *śloka*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives the highest tribute to that category.

तेषां ज्ञानी नित्ययुक्त एकभक्तिर्विशिष्यते ।
प्रियो हि ज्ञानिनोऽत्यर्थमहं स च मम प्रिय: ॥१७॥

Teṣām jñānī nityayukta ekabhaktiḥ viśiṣyate;
Priyo hi jñānino'tyartham aham sa ca mama priyaḥ — 7. 17

‘Of them, the *jñāni*, the wise person, ever-steadfast, (and fired) with devotion to the One, excels; for supremely dear am I to the *jñāni*, and he or she also is dear to Me.’

Teṣām jñānī nityayuktaḥ , ‘among all of them the *jñānī* is *nityayuktaḥ* , constantly a *yogī* ’; not a five-minute *yogī* who then gives it up. Just like an *ārtaḥ ; ārtas* are generally religiously inclined when they are in trouble. When the trouble is over, they no more think of God. That is called *ārtaḥ* type. Even in respect of them, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is very generous. ‘Even he or she is good because he or she also thought of the higher Reality beyond *Māyā.’ Ekānta bhaktiḥ, ekabhakti*, these are wonderful expressions in the science of *bhakti* . The great book on *bhakti* , the *Nārada Bhakti sūtras* (verse 67) says: *bhaktā ekāntino mukhyāḥ* , ‘among all *bhaktas*, the *ekānta bhaktas*, one-pointed devotees, are supreme’. *Viśiṣyate*, ‘is most excellent’ among all the four; *priyo hi jñānino ’tyartham aham*, ‘to the *jñānī* I am very very dear’. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as an incarnation of the Divine, uses *aham*, ‘I’. *Sa ca mama priyaḥ*, ‘he or she also is very dear to Me’. I love such a person very much, he or she also loves Me very much; there is no separation between us.

So, that is the nature of the highest *bhakti*, or the highest *jñāna*. For example, a boy like Prahlāda, whose story is narrated in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (seventh book), never wanted anything from the Divine. He wanted only pure love; love for love’s sake only. The Lord was very pleased with that little child of five years old. In the presence of the Lord who incarnated as the Narasimha, or man-lion, everyone was frightened seeing the form of Narasimha. The only person who was absolutely fearless and calm was this boy, Prahlāda, because his heart was free from all evil, from all *Māyā*, and was absolutely pure. The merciful Bhagavān Narasimha offered a boon to Prahlāda because his father Hiraṇyakaśipu had troubled this boy very much. So, Narasimha said, says the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (VII. ix. 52), ‘Prahlāda, ask a boon from me. I am pleased with you’: *prahlāda bhadra bhadram te prīto ’ham te ’surottama*, ‘O, Prahlāda, may good betide you, may good betide you, I am very pleased with you, the best among the asuras .’ Then he said, ‘Ask any boon from me, I will be happy to give you.’ And this boy says, ‘I am not a business man to trade in love and *bhakti* . My *bhakti* is one-pointed. I don’t ask anything in return.’ He uses

the word, 'I am not a vaṇik or merchant or a trader in *bhakti*. ' That is why Prahlāda dominates the *bhakti* thought of India as a pure devotee of God.

So here, *priyo hi jñānino'tyartham aham, sa ca mama priyaḥ*, 'he is also dear to Me; I am also dear to him'; that is the language Śrī Kṛṣṇa has used regarding the fourth category, the *jñānī*. But the next *śloka* shows the generosity of the heart of Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

उदारा: सर्व एवैते ज्ञानी त्वात्मैव मे मतम् ।
आस्थित: स हि युक्तात्मा मामेवानुत्तमां गतिम् ॥१८॥

Udārāḥ sarva evaite jñānī tvātmaiva me matam;
Ásthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā māmevānuttamām gatim — 7. 18

'Noble indeed are they all, but the *jñāni* or wise person I regard as My very Self; for with the mind steadfast, he or she is established in Me alone, as the supreme goal.'

All these four are *udārās*, 'noble-minded'; *udāratā* is noble-mindedness, a wonderful word in Sanskrit. A famous Sanskrit *śloka* says:

Ayam nijaḥ paro veti gaṇanā laghucetasām;
Udāra caritānam tu vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam —

'This is one's own, that is another's, is the attitude of the small-minded. But, to the noble-minded, the whole world is one's own family.'

This spiritual unity of all humanity makes the whole world, or *vasudhā*, a *kuṭumba* or a family. This is an ancient idea repeated again and again in our literature from the Vedas up to Sri Ramakrishna's time: *Yasya viśvam bhavati ekam nīḍam*, says the Vedas, 'for whom the whole world becomes one nest or home'.

Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: all these four devotees are noble-minded, *udārāḥ*, though the first one is selfish and wants God only to get something from Him, i.e. he uses God, he does not love Him. Even then, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'you are noble-minded.' What a wonderful idea! *Udārāḥ sarva evaite ; but, jñānī tu ātmaiva me matam*, 'so far as jñānī is concerned, he is My very Self.' *Ásthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā mām eva anuttamām gatim*, 'the *jñānī* is steadfast, he or she is established in Me alone as the supreme goal'. That is

the status of the pure *jñānī* or of the pure *bhakta*; and I repeat once again what Sri Ramakrishna said, 'pure *bhakti* and pure *jñāna* are one and the same'. All differences vanish there. The Lord alone is; that is the nature of highest *jñāna* and *bhakti* . This is a great truth.

The next *śloka* gives you a wonderful thought: how do you get this highest attitude? You may have to work for it in many lives; struggle, struggle, eventually you will get to that state. It doesn't come straight away; it is not by magic one gets to that state. So, I just read the next *śloka* which introduces us to this idea: 'build up the spiritual life little by little'. What a beautiful idea it is! From boyhood or girlhood, a boy or a girl of ten tries to be spiritual, little by little, like those insects, those particular creatures in the ocean in the coral islands; from the bottom of the sea up to the top, these coral creatures have built up the coral islands.

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥१९॥

Bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavānmām prapadyate;
Vāsudevaḥ sarvamiti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ — 7. 19

'At the end of many births, the man or woman of *jñāna* or wisdom takes refuge in Me, realizing that all this is Vāsudeva (Śrī Kṛṣṇa or the one innermost Self of all); very rare is that great soul.'

After repeated births, struggling, struggling to perfect oneself, in the final life one realizes the supreme truth, *vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti*, 'that everything is *Vāsudeva*, the Lord is there in everything'; but such a devotee is verily rare. That is the language here, *sa mahātmā*, 'he or she is a *mahātmā '; sudurlabhaḥ*, 'very difficult to come across'. It is a very high state of perfection, but everywhere there have been somebody or the other to achieve this perfection, just like what we find among those climbing the Mount Everest; only a few have succeeded so far. Similarly, there is a Mount Everest of spiritual experience, seeing the Lord in everything, inside and outside, and that is what this *śloka* says.

After defining four types of devotees: *ārtaḥ, jijñāsuḥ, arthārthī* and *jñānī*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, they are all fine, they are all noble-minded. *Udārāḥ*

sarva evaite, even those who worship Me for getting worldly advantages, 'even they are *udārāḥ*, noble-minded'; *jñānī tu ātmaiva me matam*, 'but the jñānī is My very Self'; *āsthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā mām eva anuttamām gatim* , 'ever fixed in Me, a *jñānī* achieves the higher state of existence'.

Having said this, in verse 19 Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: When you practise spiritual life, you gain something by the time life is over. You are dead and gone, but your *samskāras* or innate tendencies in your subtle body remain. Then you get another birth, continuing the struggle, building up something more. Therefore, the Lord says:

Bahūnām janmanām ante, 'at the end of many many births'. In life after life he or she has been striving to achieve the highest realization, and the *jñānī* comes to this realization in the final stage, in the last birth. What is the realization? *Vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti*, 'the whole universe is *Vāsudeva*', that primordial, divine Pure Consciousness, whom we call Brahman, Atman, Viṣṇu, or *Ádyāśakti*, or by various other names; but the truth is one and the same, and the whole universe is nothing but the manifestation of that absolute Reality. We call it *Vāsudeva* in the *bhakti* religion. Vāsudeva, Nārāyaṇa, all these are various words meaning the same Reality. This is the highest realization. Such a person is rare.

Swami Vivekananda said, if a society has not produced any such people, that society is doomed; it has no direction; it will slowly decay and disappear. But if there are a few such, they will show you the way. Then you can be sure that the culture in the society will be permanent and steady; such a society knows how to renew itself because it has the living example before it. This is the concept of this particular expression *vāsudevaḥ sarvamiti*, 'everything is Vāsudeva'. The whole world is *brahma mayam*, 'filled with Brahman'. In our time, you find Sri Ramakrishna saying in *The Gospel of Sri Ramkrishna*: 'I see everything in front of me as Nārāyaṇa.'

Every wave in the ocean is a pulsation of the ocean. The ocean is real, these pulsations come and go, but knowledge of the ocean is the supreme truth about the ocean and about the wave. In this universe of ours, that infinite Brahman, that Vāsudeva, that Pure Consciousness, has manifested in these millions of forms. Among other manifestations, there are these human forms. In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (XI. ix. 28) it is mentioned that,

after creation, there came many types of entities in the universe in the course of evolution—cosmic as well as organic. Finally, Brahman, that supreme Consciousness, evolved the human form and then *mudamāpa devaḥ*, 'The Divine Reality was very happy'. The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* gives this reason for this happiness: 'Because in this form, there is the organic capacity to realize Brahman, the very source of the universe and human beings'—*brahmāvaloka dhiṣaṇam*. That is a very wonderful statement ! That speaks of the highest uniqueness of the human being.

One whole book, written by Sir Julian Huxley, the biologist, has this title, The Uniqueness of Man, and the author says there: 'Man is unique in more ways than one.' That uniqueness understood by Western biology has been carried to the highest level by Vedanta. He can know the universe, he can ask questions, he can know the very source of the universe. That is why this sentence, *vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti*, is important. That realization comes to us in our last birth. By perfecting ourselves life after life, in the last birth, everything is ready. Just a little last effort and realization comes. That is called the last birth of a human being. He or she then realizes the supreme truth. 'Such great people are very rare', *sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ*. Every time there is somebody like that living in this great country, but we may not be able to recognize him or her; sometimes we can, mostly we cannot. Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself will say so later on (9. 11) . *Sarvam brahma mayam, sarvam vāsudeva mayam*, 'everything is Brahman, everything is Śrī Kṛṣṇa' these are the words we use in our literature. So, in this *śloka*, we have got the highest type of spiritual realization. Everything is Brahman, everything is that ultimate truth. This particular human being, giving up this particularity, the ego, could realize it; that is the ultimate realization. The last word in spiritual realization is this, says Sri Ramakrishna also.

कामैस्तैस्तैर्हृतज्ञानाः प्रपद्यन्तेऽन्यदेवताः ।
तं तं नियममास्थाय प्रकृत्या नियताः स्वया ॥२०॥

Kāmaistaistairhṛtajñānāḥ prapadyante'nyadevatāḥ;
Tam tam niyamamāsthāya prakṛtyā niyatāḥ svayā — 7. 20

'Others again, deprived of discrimination due to this or that sensual desire, following this or that rite, devote themselves to other mythical gods,

led by their nature.'

People are carried away by their own *prakṛti*, by their own nature. There are *samskāras* which we have accumulated and which give us a particular direction in our own life. And so, in this case, people are drawn by various desires, *kāmaistaistairhṛtajñānāḥ*, 'the knowledge of oneself is covered up and one is drawn towards various desires and cravings'. And to satisfy those desire and cravings, apart from the striving of heart and mind, he or she also worships gods: 'Let me get something from Him. He may be able to give'. So, they say, 'All right, I shall worship this god, or worship that god'. Out of lots of mythical gods and goddesses, people create a religion and worship these particular gods drawn by their *kāma* or desire of the heart. *Kāmaistaistairhṛtajñānāḥ*, 'real *jñāna* is drawn away by these various cravings'; therefore, *prapadyante'nyadevatāḥ*, 'they worship various other gods'. Why not worship that supreme Divine from whom everything has come, in whom we live, and to whom we return? Why go to all these various gods? Because the heart is full of cravings. 'He may help me.' So, we have got a big calendar of mythical gods and goddesses and their worship in our religion. In other religions also, there are various types of gods and goddesses. This drawing the heart away from the One Supreme Divine to various lesser deities is in all religious practices.

Tam tam niyamam āsthāya, 'following the disciplines of those religions'; *niyamas* means 'rules and rites'; if one wants to worship a particular deity, there is one set of *niyama*; similarly, for other deities—gods and goddesses. We perform various rites, not knowing that these gods are only different forms of the one infinite Divine Brahman. That knowledge is not there. We separate these gods from the main divine Reality because the heart is dominated by *kāma* or desires. Heart's cravings have 'drawn away our *jñāna ', hṛtajñānāḥ*. By discrimination (*viveka*), we are able to understand that there is only one infinite Divine; these different gods are merely different names and forms of that one Divinity. That truth can come only by the use of discrimination. Most people do not have this discrimination. What destroys discrimination? The predominance of sensory cravings. They destroy that power of discrimination. Therefore, they worship these various gods thinking they are all separate: 'This god will give us something, that god will give us something, etc.', generally

with a worldly calculation. Now, this is called popular religion, and popular religion is everywhere the same. Very few people seek true religion, which has spiritual growth, development and realization as the theme.

So, here is one verse in which Śrī Kṛṣṇa refers to most people in the world. Having said that four types of people worship the Divine, He also said that they are all *udārās*, 'generous'; further, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is explaining their behaviour by saying that this is their difficulty: their nature drags them in a direction away from the Supreme Divinity.

In the Upaniṣads, this whole mistaken idea has been subjected to severe criticism. The English translation of Śaṅkarācārya's commentary on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* by Swami Madhavananda reads (I. iv. 10): 'because you are the Atman, what can these gods and other powers do to you?' Nothing. For *there is no difference as regards Brahman or the knowledge of It, between (spiritual) giants like Vāmadeva a nd the human weaklings of today*! The gods seem to keep the human beings under their control. Human beings are treated as 'cattle to the gods', *paśurevam sa devānām*; that is the exact language used in that *Upaniṣad*. And the example given is: A cowherd has about hundred cattle under him, and he is doing well. A tiger comes and snatches away one cattle. The cowherd is very unhappy because his property is being destroyed. Now, we are as such cattle to the gods above. They do not want anyone to give up rituals and deviate from their control; this is what is overthrown by the Upaniṣads. Looks like very modern! But this thinking is so ancient. Why do you remain like cattle to the mythical gods? Are you not infinite in your true nature? That infinite one from which this universe has come is your own true nature. Why don't you strive to know it? But if you try to know it, gods may put obstacles in your way. They don't want you to go beyond their control. See the language in the Upaniṣad and Śaṅkarācārya's commentary; both are masterly expositions of this infinite and free nature of the human being.

Śaṅkarācārya quotes a verse from *Mahābhārata* (XIV. xix. 54, Bhandarkar edition) in this connection, the second line of which says: *na ca etad iṣṭam devānām martyaih upari vartanam*, 'this is not liked by the *devas* that men or women should live above them.' This is reflected in

human feudal societies where aristocrats do not like common people to rise above them.

A wonderful orientation to our religion was given by Swami Vivekananda in the modern period. We believe in hundreds of mythical gods and goddesses. Not much blessing came to us, only foreign invasion, again and again. Vivekananda said: 'First, have faith in yourself; then have faith in God and in other human beings.' We had no faith in ourselves, and therefore, all this trouble came. That Vedantic idea is coming to our people for the first time. Have *ātmaśraddhā*, the attitude of 'I can, I can. There are enormous energies within me. The divine is sleeping within me.' This is the new attitude. So, he boldly said, 'The old religion said he is an atheist who does not believe in God; the new religion tells you, he is an atheist who does not believe in himself.' First, have faith in yourself; then only can you have faith, solid, dynamic faith, in God or in other human beings. We have been too much carried away by the idea of being the slaves of all sorts of gods and goddesses.

So, our people must learn to realize the one infinite Divine as the Self of all; and everyone loves the Self, the most. Other loves are only the derivatives of this love, and that Self is the infinite Atman, the Self of your self. Turn your attention to the same Self in all; then you will love others also. This is the basic philosophy which Swami Vivekananda preached from the Upaniṣads for the modern period. It cuts through all limitations of nature, creed, race, etc.; it is universal. That Atman is your true nature. Atman is the nature of men and women in Russia, China, everywhere—the infinite Atman. What a beautiful conception! All slavery goes away; all kinds of fears go away. That religion of fearlessness is the great teaching of the Upaniṣads. That is the only literature in the world, Swamiji said, which always preaches fearlessness and strength, *abhaya* and *śakti*. It is the first lesson we have to learn. 'Each soul is potentially divine, the goal (of life) is to manifest this Divine within', is the first statement of the Vedantic truth given by Swami Vivekananda (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 1, p. 124). One must base one's religion on this truth; then he or she can worship other gods if one likes, but with this knowledge that all worship is ultimately of the one Divinity. Don't quarrel about names, like,

our Father in Heaven, Allah, Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Śiva. All these names also are of the one infinite Reality.

Therefore, do not quarrel, for truth is one. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling us here: 'When the heart is drawn by various cravings, the first thing that happens to you is that your power of discrimination gets destroyed; knowledge gets destroyed; then we become weak and behave like cattle to the gods. 'Don't behave like cattle to the gods!' That is the message of the Upaniṣads. There must be no more that sense of weakness, and self-hypnotising that people have practised for ages. Don't hypnotise yourself any longer; become strong, manifest the divine within, and every effort must be made in that direction.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling that great truth in verse 20 and in the next verse:

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयाऽर्चितुमिच्छति ।
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥२१॥

Yo yo yām yām tanum bhaktaḥ śraddhayārcitumicchati;
Tasya tasyācalām śraddhām tāmeva vidadhāmyaham — 7. 21

'Whatsoever form any devotee seeks to worship with *śraddhā*—that *śraddhā* of his or her I make unwavering.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is so generous: *yo yo yām yām tanum bhaktaḥ śraddhayā arcitum icchati*, 'Any devotee who wants to worship with faith any particular god or goddess', I help him or her to worship with great *śraddha* or faith. *Tasya tasyācalām śraddhām tāmeva vidadhāmyaham* , 'that very *śraddha* I strengthen in him or her'. That is the way he or she is expressing one's religious faith. If I disturb him or her now, that person may loose everything. Therefore, I don't disturb him or her now. One must come to the divine slowly, through experience and discrimination. This is the next teaching Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving, namely, generosity—'don't condemn'. In the literature of Swami Vivekananda, we find this idea, 'don't condemn anyone'. If you can show anyone something better, show, but don't condemn. Strengthen each in his or her own faith, in his or her own belief, and later on, there will be some change in that person. 'Don't condemn' is a great command in religion which Swami Vivekananda uses. Sri

Ramakrishna also used it and usually the Hindu religion has that generous attitude. Don't condemn any particular practice.

One day, Naren himself, the future Swami Vivekananda, condemned a particular religious sect of Calcutta of those times, in the presence of Sri Ramakrishna. After hearing everything, Sri Ramakrishna gently said: 'Naren, welcome them. They practise according to their understanding. Every house has a back door to enter, not only the front door. Some people will like to enter the house through the back door, where toilets are there; some people come from the front door. But, there is a back door also; it also allows you to enter. Therefore, 'don't condemn.' That was an echo of this teaching, 'don't condemn', which we have to follow. It is important, especially in the modern age, with respect to children. If you start condemning when children commit small mistakes, they will lose faith in themselves; they will become weaker and weaker. Encourage them, join with them. Play with them and then they will grow higher and higher. That is the true attitude of education and the same thing is in religion also. For us, education and religion are earlier and later phases of human development. So, 'don't condemn' is a great expression. If you can't show something better, and that too with gentleness and sympathy, and if you just constantly condemn a particular person for his or her work or life, that is very bad; it would destroy one's faith in oneself.

So, 'that *śraddha* I strengthen in him'; how does that person benefit? The next verse answers:

स तया श्रद्धया युक्तस्तस्याराधनमीहते ।
लभते च तत: कामान्मयैव विहितान्हि तान् ॥२२॥

Sa tayā śraddhayā yuktastasyārādhanamīhate;
Labhate ca tataḥ kāmānmayaiva vihitānhi tān — 7. 22

'Endued with that *śraddhā*, one engages in the worship of that, and from it, gains one's desires—these being verily dispensed by Me alone.'

Sa tayā śraddhayā yuktaḥ tasyārādhanam īhate , 'endowed with that *śraddhā*, he or she engages in the worship of that particular form of the Divine'; *labhate ca tataḥ kāmān*, 'whatever fruit one hopes to get, he or she

also gets it'. But, who gives this fruit to the worshipper? 'It comes from Me alone, the one infinite Source', *mayaiva vihitān hi tān*; not from the gods, but from Me. Therefore, whatever worship you do, whatever fruits you get, ultimately comes only from that one infinite Source.

Then the next verse says: but, if discrimination is used, you will realize that these are all limited advantages to get. You can see that those who worship the deities get limited advantages only; nothing very high; neither high spiritual development, nor knowledge, nor realization. What results will you get either by worshipping the gods or the one infinite Source? The next verse answers it:

अन्तवत्तु फलं तेषां तद्भवत्यल्पमेधसाम् ।
देवान्देवयजो यान्ति मद्भक्ता यान्ति मामपि ॥२३॥

Antavattu phalam teṣām tadbhavatyalpamedhasām;
Devāndevayajo yānti madbhaktā yānti māmapi — 7. 23

'But the fruit (accruing) to these men and women of little understanding is limited. The worshippers of the devas go to the devas and My devotees come unto Me.'

Antavattu phalam teṣām, 'their fruits are all of temporary nature'; after some time they end, whatever blessing you will get, they are all of temporary nature. *Tatbhavati alpa medhasām*, 'that is because their intelligence is very ordinary'. Their worldly intelligence may be very high, but 'spiritual intelligence is very very limited in them', *alpa medhasām*; because they can't pierce through the delusion that is in them, and their discrimination has been carried away by so many sensory cravings. Then, people must ask themselves and find their answer. What is the result that we get by worshipping the gods, or by worshipping the infinite Divine Being? Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *devān deva yajo yānti*, 'worshippers of the *devās*, gods, go to *devās*'; and, *mad bhaktā yānti mām api*, 'My devotees come to me'.

Here the words *mām api* are used; 'they come to Me (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) alone' as a human incarnation of the Supreme Divinity. Likewise, *Bhagavān* Buddha, Jesus Christ, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Sri Ramakrishna or Śrī Rāma; they are all human incarnations. So, everybody cannot see that this person is that

Divine Being in reality, because he or she is deluded by the external appearance. Śrī Kṛṣṇa said this in the fourth chapter, verses 6 to 8. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa goes one step further to clarify the situation, to explain why everyone does not recognize a Divine Incarnation.

अव्यक्तं व्यक्तिमापन्नं मन्यन्ते मामबुद्धय: ।
परं भावमजानन्तो ममाव्ययमनुत्तमम् ॥२४॥

Avyaktam vyaktimāpannam manyante mām abuddhayaḥ;
Param bhāvam ajānanto mamāvyayam anuttamam — 7. 24

'The foolish regard Me, the unmanifested, as come into manifestation, not knowing My Supreme State, which is immutable and transcendental.'

'I am,' says Śrī Kṛṣṇa, 'really speaking, *avyaktam* or unmanifested, beyond these manifestations as the world; that is My true nature'. But now, as a human being, I have become *vyaktam*, a manifestation, an individual; that infinite has become a finite human being. In the latter form only, ordinary people look upon Me. They don't see My *avyaktam* dimension; they see only the *vyaktam* dimension. *Manyante mām*, 'they look upon Me'; *abuddhayaḥ* , 'those who have a low intellect'; *abuddhiḥ*, 'not a sufficiently intelligent person'; *param bhāvam ajānanto*, 'not realizing My higher nature'; this what you see is human nature, but there is also a divine nature in Me; that they cannot understand, they cannot see; *mama avyayam anuttamam*, 'My changeless, transcendental nature'. I am the Supreme Reality, above all the beings. I am the one Lord of the universe. That aspect they cannot see. They see what their senses tell them and conclude that, 'they are limited human beings. Like us, therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa also eats and drinks, he also lives like us. So, he is also one of us, nothing higher is there in him.' That is why people cannot appreciate greatness. Appreciating greatness needs a little greatness in oneself. This is a beautiful idea and I wish we understand it in our society. We always judge people in society. It is natural for us to judge people, but how do we judge? We judge according to the measure of our own experience; beyond that we cannot see that there is a higher dimension and that tremendous energy is concentrated in the person of that dimension.

When Gandhiji appeared in India as a political leader, many people looked at him and asked, ‘what is there in him?’, and when one national Congress leader, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, referred to his thin body as a Mickey Mouse in all its humour, Gandhiji appreciated it. Soon our people knew that this Mickey Mouse contains so much energy, so much power for influencing the whole nation, the whole world, as it were. So, this is a lesson other people must learn; we are so facile in judging people and holding on to our judgement. A little doubt is good: ‘This is what I think, but I may be wrong.’ That is a very good idea, and yet life has to go on based upon the judgement. But whenever you find a change is needed, do not hesitate to change. That is a great mind which can change quickly when the situation demands it.

So, regarding the highest manifestation of the Divine as an *avatāra*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that we can’t measure him with our human skill. It is something extraordinary. Romain Rolland describes Sri Ramakrishna in the very Introduction to his book, *Life of Ramakrishna*. A man like Romain Rolland can see through the physical form and see the power working within—an artistic vision and a spiritual vision, different from a dull, prosaic vision. So, describing Ramakrishna, he gives us a wonderful sentence in that Introduction:

‘Ramakrishna’s external life was set in a very limited frame, far away from the currents and cross-currents of the contemporary world.’

Perfectly true! In a corner of the Dakshineswar Temple, living there, somewhat illiterate; he was a priest before. Externally there is nothing in him, we can say. Then comes the next sentence:

‘His inner life embraced the whole multiplicity of men and gods.’

Similarly, Buddha was looked upon as a *mahā śramaṇā* or a great monk only; but he shook the whole of Asia, inspired millions and millions of people. Wherefrom did that power come? That power was there, but at that time people couldn’t understand it; he looked so ordinary. That is why sometimes it is better not to see a great person from near, but see him from a distance in time.

Now this idea has been beautifully expounded by Sri Ramakrishna in a parable. A person took his diamond and asked a vegetable seller: 'how much will you give me for this diamond?' 'Only ten pounds of potatoes; nothing more.' Then he went to a cloth merchant. He offered nine yards of cloth and nothing more. Finally, he went to a diamond merchant and asked him, 'How much will you give?' He replied, 'Ten thousand rupees I shall give you'. So, in spiritual life, it is the same. When we try to judge others, always keep in mind this truth that that judgement is conditioned by the range of one's experience. Within that range only, does one estimate a person. So, it is good to have a little doubt, so that we don't become fanatics. It is fanaticism to think that whatever we estimate is correct and nothing else. 'What I understand is this; that is what I can say now; if I see more, I certainly may change my opinion.' That is a scientific attitude. Say, 'according to the present data available, this is the truth of it; but, if more data comes, some of them contradictory, I will change my conclusion.' That is called a scientific mind. So, in society, we need that scientific mind, that scientific temper, as we call it. We are in search of truth, we are not going to glorify our own opinion. We shall subject our opinion to the test of truth. When the whole nation is educated in this scientific temper, a beautiful human development will come. That is what we need very much in our society.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *Avyaktam vyaktim āpannam*, 'the undifferentiated has become differentiated, the unmanifest has become the manifest'; *manyante mām abuddhayaḥ*, 'those who have no intelligence, they think like that about Me'; they think Śrī Kṛṣṇa is just a limited person like others in this world; *param bhāvam ajānanto*, 'not understanding My higher nature'. Some contemporaries of Jesus similarly remarked: 'Is he not a carpenter's son?' Verse 11 of chapter 9 is similar to this verse; only a slightly different phraseology is used there:

Avajānanti mām mūḍhā mānuṣīm tanumāśritam;
Param bhāvam ajānanto mama bhūta maheśvaram —

Mām avajānanti mūḍhāḥ, 'foolish people deride Me'; *mānuṣīm tanum āśritam*, 'who has assumed a human body'; *param bhāvam ajānantaḥ*, 'not

understanding My higher form'; *Mama bhūtamaheśvaram*, 'My supreme state as the Lord of this universe'.

That is the meaning of this *param bhāvam ajānanto mamāvyayam anuttamam*. This is My true form. I am the Master of the universe. I assumed this human body to do some work, to save this world, but these people don't understand what is the truth about My nature. They will put the incarnation into trouble because of the lack of insight. In foreign countries, they will be crucified, as Jesus was. Here in India, at least we don't crucify them; we just speak ill of them from the beginning, and yet, slowly we understand, 'Yes, they are correct.' In Calcutta, some people used to say about Sri Ramakrishna, 'Who is that priest in Dakshineswar? Sometimes he goes into some sort of nervous sickness, and loses his consciousness.' But those who could understand, understood the greatness of the man. Men like Keshab Chandra Sen—he was a devotee of God leading a spiritual life—started to spread the glory of Sri Ramakrishna, 'he is not of an ordinary type, but extraordinary.' That is what made the people of Calcutta understand the greatness of Sri Ramakrishna and brought to him all the serious devotees, including the young devotees, who became, later on, Swami Vivekananda and others.

So, we have the next verse 25, which says:

नाहं प्रकाशः सर्वस्य योगमायासमावृतः ।
मूढोऽयं नाभिजानाति लोको मामजमव्ययम् ॥२५॥

Nāham prakāśaḥ sarvasya yogamāyāsamāvṛtaḥ;
Mūḍho'yam nābhijānāti loko mām ajam avyayam — 7. 25

'Veiled by the *yogamāyā*, illusion divine, I am not manifest to all. This deluded world knows Me not—the Unborn, the Immutable.'

Nāham prakāśaḥ sarvasya, 'I am not manifest clearly to everybody'. Why? *Yogamāyāsamāvṛtaḥ*, 'covered as I am by My own *yogamāyā*', that wonderful *Māyā* by which I can assume any kind of expression; *mūḍho'yam nābhijānāti loko mām*, 'this foolish world doesn't know Me'; *ajam avyayam*, 'I am the *ajam*, unborn, *avyayam*, imperishable.' That dimension of Mine *mūḍhaḥ ayam lokaḥ*, 'this foolish world'; *nābhijānāti*,

‘they do not understand’. This is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling here. That is why he had to suffer so much. Even somebody complained that Śrī Kṛṣṇa has stolen the *syāmantaka* jewel, that he was a thief, and some people began to think that Śrī Kṛṣṇa was indeed a thief. And he had to justify himself, go and find the *syāmantaka*, and hand it over to its owner, Satyajit. He is the divine himself. Even He, as a human being, had to pass through all these difficulties. Sri Ramakrishna and Buddha also had problems. Sri Ramakrishna suffered from throat cancer and passed away. So, when you see all these things, you may feel, ‘how can this man be a God? This cannot be. He is an ordinary person’—that thought will come to many people. But those who know spiritual realities, they will be able to see through the external and see the real worth of the person concerned.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, ‘I cover myself with My *yogamāyā* to make people see an ordinary person in Me, where there is really something infinitely deeper.’ They can’t see the infinite; they can see only the finite. That is the nature of *Māyā. Māyā* makes the infinite appear as finite, the immortal to appear as the mortal; and we are all within that *Māyā*. So, we are not able to understand the divine dimension of the incarnation. This is a wonderful statement Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives here in this verse 25.

In the next verse and the other remaining three out of four verses, some beautiful truths are given, and the scientific attitude is expounded in verses 27 and 28.

वेदाहं समतीतानि वर्तमानानि चार्जुन ।
भविष्याणि च भूतानि मां तु वेद न कश्चन ॥२६॥

Vedāham samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna;
Bhaviṣyāṇi ca bhūtāni mām tu veda na kaścana — 7. 26

‘I know, O Arjuna, the beings of the whole past, and present, and the future, but none knows Me.’

Vedāham samatītāni bhūtāni vartamānāni ca arjuna, ‘I know the beings of the past, O Arjuna, and of the present’; *bhaviṣyāṇi ca*, ‘and of the future too’; *mām tu veda na kaścana*, ‘but none knows Me’; none knows My real dimension. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling in this verse 26.

After that comes the definition of the scientific attitude, scientific mind, in two famous verses; verses which were commented upon by Śaṅkara to bring home some scientific truths that are some of the many contributions of India. Scientific thinking and search lead to scientific truth. As long as our nation stuck to science, it was great. As soon as we left science and began to entertain superstitious ideas, all sorts of mythologies, the nation became weaker and weaker. You can see that sometime from about the 9th century AD, this weakness came upon the national scene. We are getting out of it today. So, in today's science, we are really re-studying science. We had studied it before; it is not new to us. India is entering into a new era of scientific development after forgetting it for a few centuries. That is what is happening today all over this great country.

Now we enter into verses 27 and 28. I would like to point out the importance of these two verses; how Śaṅkarācārya brings out in his *Gītā* commentary, the scientific mind, the scientific temper, the scientific attitude of the *Gītā* , and stresses it. The *Gītā* merely says:

इच्छाद्वेषसमुत्थेन द्वन्द्वमोहेन भारत ।
सर्वभूतानि संमोहं सर्गे यान्ति परन्तप ॥२७॥

Icchā dveṣa samutthena dvandva mohena bhārata;
Sarvabhūtāni sammoham sarge yānti parantapa — 7. 27

'By the delusion of the pairs of opposites, arising from desire and aversion, O descendant of Bharata, all beings fall into delusion at birth, O scorcher of foes.'

O Arjuna, all beings are deluded from the very beginning because of the two passions of the human mind, *icchā* and *dveṣa*. The first is *icchā* : 'I want this, I want that, I desire this, I desire that'. The other is *dveṣa* : 'if I don't get it, I will get angry, I will destroy everything.' These are called *icchā* and *dveṣa*. 'Due to these two delusions', the human being is not able to know the truth. *Dvandva mohena*, 'from this twofold delusions', desire and aversion or anger—delusions which are always together; where there is desire, there is also aversion or anger. When an obstruction to fulfilling desire comes, anger comes automatically. These are the two *mohas*,

‘delusions’; *bhārata*, ‘O Arjuna’; *sarvabhūtāni*, ‘all beings’; *sammoham sarge yānti* , ‘at the time of creation, become subject to this tremendous delusion’; *parantapa*, ‘O scorcher of foes, i.e. Arjuna’. Men and women suffer when they are subjected to these two delusions—*icchā* and *dveṣa* . Now, from this particular idea of the *Gītā* , Śaṅkara brings out the implication, *and that is something marvellous* : that, not only in the spiritual life you suffer when you are under the delusion of the *icchā* and *dveṣa*, even in day-to-day life, dealing with external nature, dealing with other human beings, we always suffer when we are subjected to these two delusions—*icchā* and *dveṣa*. That concept he puts in a fine sentence in Sanskrit:

> *na hi icchā dveṣa doṣa vaśīkṛta cittasya yathābhūtārtha viṣaya jñānam utpadyate bahirapi—*

Bahirapi means ‘even in our external life’; *jñāna*m, ‘right knowledge’; *na utpadyate*, ‘does not come’; *icchā dveṣa doṣa vaśīkṛta cittasya*, ‘of the mind which is subjected to the evils of desire and aversion or anger, in the mind completely controlled by these two’; *yathābhūta artha viṣaya jñānam na utpadyate*, ‘there does not arise what is the truth of a thing as it is’; *bahirapi*, ‘even in the external world’.

That is why the scientist tells us to train the mind in objectivity. Don’t be carried away by your own passions and emotions. Suppose you are experimenting on a particular thing. You have a particular desire that this particular conclusion must be found in the results of the experiment. If the desire dominates you, you will certainly find that in the experiment, but it won’t be true. That desire must go. ‘I shall see the truth and then believe it. That will be science.’ So, in this way *icchā* and *dveṣa*, ‘desire and aversion’, are to be eliminated from the mind. They make for wrong judgement of things and persons. Just like, in the High Court, if the judge has a particular preference about a particular accused, his judgement will go wrong. If he has no preference, he will try to be true to the facts before him and then give a judgement. That will be true justice.

That is how the scientific mind develops and discovers the truth of things; not what you want to see, but what is there—what Śaṅkarācārya calls in his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*, in the second *sūtra : vastu tantra jñāna*, ‘knowledge flowing from an existing truth’. What a beautiful

expression! *Vastu tantra jñāna*. *Vastu* is the technical Sanskrit word for 'a thing as it is'. *Tantra* means 'based upon'; *jñāna*, 'knowledge'—'knowledge based upon the thing itself'; that is called *vastu tantra jñāna*. Science wants to discover Truth, which is Truth for *all*. The other type of knowledge is *puruṣa tantra jñāna*, 'knowledge arising from personal preferences'. This truth is 'very personal', *puruṣa tantra*. 'I like mango. I like this particular type of fruit.' These are all our preferences. It has a place in human life. But, in science, when we search for the truth of things, we will have to purify the mind from all attachments and aversions. Anyone who judges other human beings must remove from the mind attachment and aversion. Then only he or she can judge him or her as he or she is in reality.

Sarvabhūtāni, 'all beings'; *sammoham sarge yānti*, 'in the manifested world, become subject to this delusion'. Śaṅkara says in his commentary *bahirapi*, 'even in the external world'; as it is difficult to discover truth even in the external world, when influenced by these two delusions, it is still more difficult to discover truth in the inner world. In the inner world, it is your mind that seeks, and your mind is also what is being studied; so it is very difficult to decide. First, Śaṅkara said about the difficulty of seeking truth in the external world, as referred to earlier. Then comes:

> *kimu vaktavyam tābhyām āviṣṭabuddheḥ sammūḍhasya pratyagātmani bahu pratibandhe jñānam na utpadyate iti—*

Kimu vaktavyam, 'what then can be said?' *Tābhyām āviṣṭabuddheḥ*, 'for the mind that is under the control of these two'; *sammūḍhasya*, 'of the deluded'; *pratyagātmani*, 'in dealing with our own inner Self'; *bahu pratibandhe* , 'which is full of obstacles'. Understanding our own true nature is full of obstacles. And therefore, *jñānam na utpadyate iti*, 'knowledge doesn't come to us'. Why? Because of these two obstacles that are there. So, whether it is in physical science or inter-human relationships, or realizing our own true nature as the Atman, we need to purge the mind of these two passions—*icchā* and *dveṣa*; then you will understand the truth yourself. *This is a beautiful commentary on these two important verses*.

The next verse will say, 'those who have overcome these evils, they realize God. They realize the truth clearly, because the Truth is there; it is a

vastu, and we have only to discover it, recognize it. It is your own likes and dislikes that have to be removed from the mind.

येषां त्वन्तगतं पापं जनानां पुण्यकर्मणाम् ।
ते द्वन्द्वमोहनिर्मुक्ता भजन्ते मां दृढव्रता: ॥२८॥

Yeṣām tvantagatam pāpam janānām puṇyakarmaṇām;
Te dvandvamohanirmuktā bhajante mām dṛḍhavratāḥ—7. 28

'Those men and women of virtuous deeds, whose sin has come to an end, they, freed from the twin delusions, worship Me with steadfast devotion.'

'Those people who have overcome these two evils of *icchā* and *dveṣa*, realize Me truly, within, as the Self of all.' They have no difficulty, as their minds are pure. This is how the mind becomes pure. One's own likes and dislikes are thrown away. The mind wants nothing but the truth, nothing but the true Self that is in all. And for knowing this truth, one needs to train the mind.

In fact, in our Indian society, we need a good deal of this training. We are not interested in truth. We are interested in opinions; even prejudices are plenty. But, for one generation or two, children should be trained in the method of searching for truth; that is knowledge, and through that, they must develop some convictions. Opinions have their due place in human life, but not on serious subjects. Swami Vivekananda has said: 'Great convictions are the mothers of great deeds'. Knowledge is seeking for the truth. 'What is the truth of that or this thing?' I see a thing but I don't know whether it is true, or what is the truth of it. That questioning mind can create tremendous mental energy in a nation. You don't accept a thing unless you know it is true. You don't want merely an opinion, but the truth with that kind of thinking. Our politics and our society will be completely transformed, if we give this education to our people from their primary standard onwards.

So, *yeṣām tvantagatam pāpam*, 'those whose evils of mind have come to an end'; *pāpam* means 'evils, sinfulness of mind'; *antagatam*, 'have ended'; *janānām*, 'of people'; *puṇya karmaṇām*, 'those who have done

good deeds'; when you have done good deeds, when these evil forces—attachment and aversion—have become less and less. The concern for others is a tremendous discipline for training the mind. Then, *te dvandva moha nirmuktā*, 'they who have become freed from these two delusions'; *bhajante mām dṛḍhavratāḥ*, 'worship Me in spirit and in truth with great firmness and determination'. That is the real worship of the Divine.

As the previous *ślokas* have said, we have so many desires. So, in some book you will get, 'worship this mythical god, and he will fulfil the desire', and thus we go on changing gods. This is one thing very characteristic of some of our people. We change gods when we find that this god has not given what we sought from him. Long ago, I had a friend in Bangalore. He was a member of many religious committees. One day, I asked him, 'Why did you become a member of so many religious bodies?' 'Swamiji, don't you know?' he replied, 'if one bank fails, the other bank will help me!' That was the attitude, and some of our people have that kind of attitude. That, *bhajante mām dṛḍhavratāḥ*, 'idea to worship God in spirit and in truth' doesn't come. Behind all these various *devās* and *devīs*, 'Brahman is the only one infinite divine and non-dual'—*ekam eva advitīyam brahma*. That is pure religion; that search is the way of pure spiritual development.

So, in these two verses 27 and 28, very inspiring ideas are there, in tune with modern scientific training. In fact, there is a tremendous scientific training component in the Vedantic discipline. We are in search of truth; that is why Śaṅkara used the words, *vastu tantra jñānam , 'jñāna* based upon the *vastu*': 'what is it in itself', and not as what it appears to you. That is the great quest of the Vedantic mind. The Upaniṣads are full of these, 'What is the truth?' There is this great utterance in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad : satyam eva jayate*, 'Truth alone triumphs.' *Satyam* is the supreme virtue, supreme value. In the *Mahābhārata*, and everywhere in our literature, you will find stress on truth. Make your life true, do not take to a false life; go for true knowledge, not for false knowledge. In this way, *samyak jñānam* is stressed: the language used is 'true knowledge'. Similarly, we purify our mind by removing all that is adventitious there. Mind has to be trained in the power of penetration. What helps it to penetrate into the heart of truth is the cleaning away of *icchā* and *dveṣa*—these various likes and dislikes that fill the mind of human beings.

So, this kind of discipline must come to us from the very beginning. I want the truth of things. I don't want merely the appearance of things. So, a search for knowledge must become a search for the truth of things. That can be in the external world, and we call it *physical science*; it can be in the inner world, and we call it *the science of spirituality . Śrī Kṛṣṇa combines both here in these two verses giving the beautiful idea of the scientific training of the mind*. We have to emphasize this point often. We have so little *training of the mind* in our education. *It is mostly stuffing the brain* instead of training the mind. These are two different things. Stuffing the brain doesn't increase the power of the mind; it only becomes a sort of the Pandora's box to accumulate things. That is all. But the versatility of the human mind comes from the capacity to think, the capacity to question. That is how you train the mind. There you get precision in thinking. When you have precision in thinking, you have precision in speaking also. I have watched people giving the vote of thanks in various meetings. The same thing is said many times, and a lot of time is taken. The whole thing could be said in two minutes. It goes on for thirty minutes. Why? There is no training of the mind. Precise, to the point—that kind of thing comes only through good education. We have to train our own minds by searching for knowledge, for precise knowledge, neither more nor less but exactly, not indulging in vague speculations. At present it is not so. Mind is flimsy now; it has no power of impact upon the world around us. That is why this kind of training is absolutely essential.

You carry this same scientific attitude from the external to the internal; then religion will not become encrusted with superstitions. Today, there is plenty of superstition in the name of religion because the scientific mind is not there, that rational mind is not there, that truth-seeking mind is not there. It should not be so. You will then understand Vedanta better, which is the subject of tremendous scrutiny by brilliant minds. It is very simple and once you try to apply it in your life, a tremendous energy will come to you. High character will come to you. All that development has to come in our nation in the next few decades by understanding first, the scientific frame of mind and then approaching *Sanātana Dharma* from that point of view, approaching Vedanta from that point of view. This is a profound philosophy based upon the search for truth. That is the language of the Upaniṣads

themselves, and when you search for truth you can question; others can't question. If you are in search of dogma, you cannot question; no dogma can be questioned, or can stand questioning; but truth can be questioned. The more you question, the better. Vedanta invites the whole world today to question its conclusions and try to see the truth for themselves. *That is the place of Vedanta in the thought world of today*. It accepts modern physical science; it is not afraid of modern science. It also takes you beyond physical science. When physical science is ended, it takes you gently by the hand to realize the truth hidden within you. Physical science deals with perishable external nature. Vedanta deals with the Imperishable in the internal nature and in human beings. What is that profound mystery in the human body? Now, this kind of subject is developed scientifically in the Upaniṣads, in Vedanta. And *Gītā* is conveying that message here. This nation will be completely transformed with tremendous resources of mind and spiritual values to inspire the nation. That is the bright future. Swami Vivekananda's literature will be a tremendous source of strength for our people, where he has shown the similarity between modern scientific method and thought, and Vedantic method and thought. So, this nation will become scientifically strong, and also spiritually strong. A complete civilization will come thereby. That is Swami Vivekananda's great hope for the future.

So, the next *śloka* says:

जरामरणमोक्षाय मामाश्रित्य यतन्ति ये ।
ते ब्रह्म तद्विदुः कृत्स्नमध्यात्मं कर्म चाखिलम् ॥२९॥

Jarā maraṇa mokṣāya māmāśritya yatanti ye;
Te brahma tadviduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmam karma cākhilam—7. 29

'Those who, taking refuge in Me, strive for freedom from old age and death, know Brahman, and also the whole of *adhyātma*, and *karma* in its entirety.'

In order to free oneself from *jarā* and *maraṇa*, one takes refuge in the divine. *Jarā* is 'old age' and *maraṇa* is 'death'. Today, we have a word in English which is exactly a modification of the Sanskrit word *jarā*—geriatrics. Dealing with the problems of old age is called geriatrics. That is

called *jarā. Jarā* and *maraṇa* are the two big problems of modern society. *Jarā maraṇa mokṣa* means 'freedom from old age and death'. That is a very special contribution of Indian thought. Ancient Greek thought, following the wise dictum of their oracle of Delphi, namely, 'Man, Know Thy self', knew one part of that oracle, the external sociopolitical part, not the internal spiritual part. They knew life but they didn't know what is *jarā* and *maraṇa*. They, excepting Socrates, never investigated that subject. We investigated the subject and discovered the truth that *jarā* and *mṛtyu* apply only to the body and not to the Atman within. Within the body is the infinite Atman, ever free, beyond change and beyond death; that is a wonderful truth! The Atman in every being is described in the *Vivekacuḍāmaṇi* of Śaṅkarācārya in these words (verse 256):

Ṣaḍbhirūrmibhiḥ ayogi yogihṛt
bhāvitam na karṇaiḥ vibhāvitam —

'The Truth of the immortal Atman is free from the sixfold waves of change, but it is available by the heart of *yogis*, and unavailable by the senses.'

There are six *ūrmis* or 'waves of change' affecting everything in this world, but not affecting the Atman. *Ūrmi* or wave is the Sanskrit expression used by Śaṅkarācārya in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*. First is: *jāyate*, 'a thing is born'; then he gives it the attribute, *asti*, 'it exists'; till then it was not. Then, *vardhate*, 'grows'; a baby grows; within five years how active a little baby becomes! Then, *vipariṇamate*, 'evolves', lot of transformations take place from childhood onwards. Then begins the downward movement: *apakṣīyate*, 'goes on decaying', and finally, *naśyati*, 'dies or ceases to exist'. These are called the 'sixfold waves of change' affecting everything in this world, including the solar system, and all galactic systems. They all have a birth, have a growth, have a development, have a decay, and finally death.

But, behind this world of change is the changeless, the eternal, the immortal. That was the scientific discovery of the Indian sages pursuing the science of human possibilities or the science of human resources and finding expression in the Upaniṣads. That is what made them strong; that is what made Indian culture also immortal. By discovering the immortal, the

Upaniṣads made themselves immortal and the culture sponsored by them also immortal. *Nowhere else in the world will you find that kind of 'Mount Everest' of thought and experience*.

The Vedas declare that 'life and death are the shadows of the One Supreme Reality,'*yasya chāyā amṛtam, yasya mṛtyuḥ (Ṛg Veda samhita*, X. viii. 121). They developed this depth dimension by studying the phenomenon of not only life, but also of death. Phenomena of old age and death the Greeks never knew, except, as referred to before, Socrates and Plato. This is the opinion of the British scholar Lowes Dickinson in his book: *The Greek View of Life*.

So, here Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *jarā maraṇa mokṣāya*, 'in order to get liberated from *jarā* and *maraṇa*'. Those who know that it is the body that dies, that the Atman is ever the same, when such people face death, they face death with the greatest sense of assurance, greatest sense of peace of mind, than others. 'I have finished my journey; so far as this body is concerned, it has become useless; *jarā* has come to it, and the next stage is *maraṇa*, disappearance.' With this understanding, he or she faces death like a brother, like a friend: 'Yes, you have come, I am ready. I am ready to face this.' This attitude comes from knowledge, because we know that the true Self is beyond the sixfold waves of change. Whatever is material, whatever is physical, is changeful; not the one which is Pure Consciousness, the Atman. Śaṅkara puts it in his *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya : nitya śuddha nitya buddha nitya mukta paramātman . Nitya śuddha* , 'eternally pure'; *nitya buddha*, 'eternally awakened or illumined'; *nitya mukta*, 'eternally free'. That is the nature of the Atman. Atman is never subject to any condition. Because we don't know the truth, we feel we are conditioned. Therefore, when we understand this truth, our attitude towards death will be, 'Well, death has come. I will face it.' We hear, all over the world, beautiful examples of people dying with the spiritual knowledge strengthening them. It is not a matter to be frightened at, but we have to face it. Wherever there is birth, there is death. That knowledge is given to us in the second chapter of the *Gītā*. There again, you find this idea expressed: *vināśam avyayasya asya na kaścit kartum arhati*, 'nothing can destroy that imperishable Reality which is the Atman', and Śaṅkara comments, 'even God cannot destroy it'.

See the language: ‘even God cannot destroy the infinite Atman which is our true nature’.

And so, here Śrī Kṛṣṇa is saying: *mām āśritya yatanti ye*, ‘those who struggle depending upon Me’; *āśritya* means ‘depending upon’. Whom? Me, the One who is the infinite Self of all. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is identifying himself as the *antaryāmī*, ‘the one Atman in the heart of all people’, the deathless, immortal Self. *Mām āśritya yatanti ye*, ‘who struggles in that direction depending upon me’; *te*, ‘they’; *viduḥ*, ‘understand’. What? *Te tat brahma viduḥ*, ‘they understand that Brahman, that infinite Reality’. Then, *tat kṛtsnam adhyātmam*, ‘the complete truth about the inner Self;’ *karma ca akhilam*, ‘also all about *karma*’. In the beginning itself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa had told that I am going to tell you the totality of Reality, with nothing left out, and therefore, he spoke of *aparā prakṛti* and *parā prakṛti*, ‘ordinary nature and higher nature’ as constituting the totality of Reality. That knowledge you will get in that state. *Adhyātmam karma ca akhilam*, ‘also the knowledge of all spirituality and of all actions’. They will understand all this truth, *akhilam*, in its entirety, says this particular verse.

The body doesn’t get that freedom; it will always be subject to *jarā* and *maraṇa* . If anybody wants to prolong this body, it will be very bad; in fact, nature won’t allow it. This law was understood by ancient Indian thinkers; they also discovered that the death of the body is not the end of the story. There is something profound left at death.

In fact, I am putting it purely from a psychological point of view. If all changes including the final end, namely, death, is an experience, somebody must be there to observe it; otherwise how can any one say that there is death? But, the living alone sees the death of another; that living one also will die; the whole phenomenal world will die. But, that observer, eternal observer, the *sākṣi*, or witness, which is always there, is our true nature. We are essentially the eternal *sākṣi* of all the changes taking place in the world. Unless there is a changeless one, change cannot be perceived at all. That is the challenge of Vedanta. You can think for yourself. How can you perceive change, unless there is something that is changeless? You sit in a room. Somebody comes to visit you and goes away. You also go away with him. Another man comes there, meets another person; they also go away. But

who can say that these various meetings took place unless there was one sitting there all the time, seeing the coming and going of all the people? Then only can one say that there is change. So, behind this world of change, there is the observer, the *sākṣi*, the witness, the changeless. That word *sākṣi*, meaning 'witness', is a very beautiful, philosophically significant word. In fact, the waking ego dies when one is in the dream state; the dream ego will also die in the dreamless state of deep sleep. Who understands the forming and going out of the two egos? That One is the *sākṣi* or witness, the ever-existing Reality. That is the logic and language of Vedanta—that which witnesses all change in the universe, who is also the universe, and who is also beyond the universe. The Sun is the *sākṣi* of the entire solar system. This Truth is beautifully expressed in one verse in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (VIII. iii. 3):

Yasmin idam yataḥ cedam yenedam ya idam svayam;
Yo'smāt parasmāt ca paraḥ tam prapadye svayambhuvam —

'In Whom is this universe, from Whom also is this universe, by Whom is this universe, Who Himself is this universe, Who is also beyond the highest in the universe, I take refuge in Him.'

It is infinite and immortal Consciousness, which has just begun to be mildly recognized in modern nuclear science. When it will pursue it further and further, it will come to the same conclusion. Consciousness is one and non-dual. There are no two or more Consciousness, as explained by nuclear scientist, Schrodinger: 'It is a singular of which the plural is unknown.' *Śāntam śivam advaitam caturtham manyante sa ātmā sa vijñeyaḥ*, says the seventh verse in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, describing this as *turīya*, 'the fourth', beyond the states of waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep. *Śāntam* means 'unchanging'; *śivam*, 'all that is auspicious'; *advaitam* , 'non-dual'; *manyante*, 'is considered as'; *caturtham*, 'the fourth'; *sa ātmā*, 'that is the Atman'; *sa vijñeyaḥ*, 'That is to be realized'. That is how the Upaniṣad puts it.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells here, 'I am that infinite Atman, of the nature of pure Consciousness. I am in the heart of all beings. Depending upon Me, you can face the challenge of death.' Then you will understand all about *adhibhūta*, *adhidaivam* and *adhiyajña*. Three words are used here. What are these?

That will be the subject discussed in the opening verses in the next chapter, chapter 8.

So, here in the last verse, verse 30 of chapter seven, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

साधिभूताधिदैवं मां साधियज्ञं च ये विदुः ।
प्रयाणकालेऽपि च मां ते विदुर्युक्तचेतसः ॥३०॥

Sādhibhūtādhidaivam mām sādhiyajñam ca ye viduḥ;
Prayāṇakāle'pi ca mām te viduḥ yuktacetasaḥ — 7. 30

'Those who know Me along with the *adhibhūta, adhidaiva, and adhiyajña*, (will continue to) know Me even at the time of death, with a steadfast mind.'

Those whose mind is *yuktaḥ*, i.e. trained in the spirit of *yoga*, such persons understand these things; what are they? *Sa adhibhūta adhidaivam adhiyajñam*, 'that which presides over material elements of nature; then, that which presides over the divine beings called gods or "the luminous realities in nature"; and finally, that which presides over rituals, sacrifices, etc.'—all these are nothing but the Divine. *Yajñā*, as a name of Viṣṇu, occurs in the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*. Viṣṇu's name is *yajña . Yajño vai viṣṇuḥ*, that is the language used by Śaṅkarācārya. So, behind all this is that infinite Reality. *Sādhibhūta adhidaivam mām sādhiyajñam ca ye viduḥ*, 'those who understand this truth behind *adhibhūta, adhiyajña* and *adhidaiva'; prayāṇakāle'pi*, 'even at the end of life, just before passing away'; *mām*, 'Me'; *te viduḥ*, 'they understand', they realize Me; *yuktacetasaḥ*, 'with the mind well disciplined in the spirit of *yoga*, in the spiritual path.' These three words can stand for the physical dimension, i.e. *adhibhūta*, the moral-ethical dimension, i.e. *adhiyajña*, and the spiritual dimension, i.e *adhidaiva* respectively.

That is the last verse in the seventh chapter, and these words used here become the beginning of the eight chapter. There Arjuna will ask such questions as you and I will ask. He will ask this question: 'What are these *adhidaiva , adhibhūta*, etc.?' Our thinkers have made a study of these. Here is a human being. He is surrounded by nature and, far into the heart of nature, some luminous powers are there. So, we call them *adhibhūtam;*

adhidaivam, 'the Self that is within us'. I as the Self dealing with this, i.e. all the adjuncts, is called *adhidaivam* . *The last one is adhiyajña*, 'some ethical and moral values impacting upon the collective human world'. *Deva* is a beautiful Sanskrit word. It merely means that which is luminous; that is all. But, later on, it began to mean mythical divine personalities in heaven etc.—Indra, Varuṇa, all these mythical *devas* . But it is very interesting that today this ancient Indian *deva* concept is coming into modern experience. There is an American book called *The Secret Life of Plants*—and we have a copy of it in the library—written by an American, or two Americans, I think. I have forgotten the names. There, when they deal with plants, they bring the concept of *deva*. The *deva* energy makes the plants grow better; there is a method of doing it. And if you go to a plant with a view to burn it, there you will find some sensation going on in the plant which you can study through microscope, etc. So, all sorts of things like these are put together in that book. And this kind of research is going on both in Russia as well as in America. So, the *adhidaiva* concept is slowly coming into our own day-to-day life. This nature around us is not dead; it has a higher dimension, *parā prakṛti*. The old physical science stated that these are all dull dead matter. But no; everywhere there is a life principle inspiring everything here. To that conclusion more scientists are coming today, through various experiments and various studies. I had referred earlier to Fred Hoyle, the British astro-physicist, a materialist before, writing his new book, *The Intelligent Universe*. There the word and concept of *deva* comes in. That idea is inspiring more and more people in the modern age.

इति ज्ञानविज्ञानयोगो नाम सप्तमोऽध्यायः ।

Iti jñānavijñāna-yogo nāma saptamo'dhyāyaḥ —

'Thus ends the seventh chapter, designated *The Way of Knowledge with Realization*.'

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 8

Akṣarabrahma-Yoga
The Way to the Imperishable Brahman

This chapter begins with a question by Arjuna.

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca—

'Arjuna said:'

किं तद्ब्रह्म किमध्यात्मं किं कर्म पुरुषोत्तम ।
अधिभूतं च किं प्रोक्तमधिदैवं किमुच्यते ॥१॥

Kim tad brahma kim adhyātmam kim karma puruṣottama;
Adhibhūtam ca kim proktam adhidaivam kim ucyate — 8. 1

'What is that Brahman, what is *Adhyātma*, and what is *Karma*, O best of persons? What is called *Adhibhūta* and what is called *Adhidaiva*? '

We came across a few of these words earlier; a few more are added here. Arjuna continues the question:

अधियज्ञः कथं कोऽत्र देहेऽस्मिन् मधुसूदन ।
प्रयाणकाले च कथं ज्ञेयोऽसि नियतात्मभिः ॥२॥

Adhiyajñaḥ katham ko'tra dehe'smin madhusūdana;
Prayāṇakāle ca katham jñeyo'si niyatātmabhiḥ — 8. 2

'Who, and in what way, is *Adhiyajña* here in this body, O destroyer of Madhu? And how are You known, at the time of death, by the self-controlled persons?'

Adhiyajñaḥ, 'the one who presides over the sacrifices, rituals'; *katham ko'tra dehe'smin madhusūdana*, 'in this body there is *adhiyajñaḥ*? How, and

who is that *adhiyajñaḥ*, O Śrī Kṛṣṇa?'; *prayāṇakāle ca katham jñeyo'si niyatātmabhiḥ*, 'how can a well-disciplined mind realise You at the time of death?' *Prayāṇakāle* means 'at the time of final departure'. Actually *prayāṇa* means 'departure'; here it means 'final departure, namely, death'. In usual departures, we go and also return. In this departure, there is no return at all; so it is called 'a final departure'. *Niyatātmabhiḥ*, 'by minds that have been disciplined'. Mind has been disciplined, but still how can we understand You and realise You at that critical moment? Please tell us all these things. In this way Arjuna puts questions containing many expressions.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'Śrī Bhagavān replies:'

अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं स्वभावोऽध्यात्ममुच्यते ।
भूतभावोद्भवकरो विसर्गः कर्मसंज्ञितः ॥३॥

Akṣaram brahma paramam svabhāvo'dhyātmam ucyate;
Bhūtabhāvodbhavakaro visargaḥ karmasamjñitaḥ — 8. 3

'The Blessed Lord said:'

'The Imperishable is the Supreme Brahman. Its dwelling in each individual body is called *Adhyātma*; the offering in sacrifice which causes the genesis and support of beings, is called *Karma*.'

Brahma paramam, 'the Supreme Reality, Brahman'; that is *akṣaram*, 'imperishable'; *svabhāvaḥ*, 'that very Brahman existing as the Self in men and women is our *svabhāva';* that is our nature. *Svabhāva* means *sva bhāva*, 'our own nature'. *Adhyātmam ucyate*, 'that is called *adhyātmam,* the Self that is within us'. When you say, 'I saw', it is 'I' who am seeing. Suppose you say merely 'saw', it has no meaning. When you say, 'I saw', then another aspect comes in, namely, a subject—*somebody* who saw. Otherwise, there can be no seeing by itself. Somebody must see. An animal or a person, somebody must be there to see. So, the self that sees, the self that experiences, must be there.

Bhūtabhāvodbhavakaro visargaḥ karmasamjñitaḥ, '*karma* is the various processes of producing and changing things in this world'. There is one creation or projection at the beginning of the cosmic evolution. Within that evolution, there are so many other activities going on—of creating, of shaping this and that; that is called *visargaḥ* based on *karma* or activity—what is called 'process' in modern technical language. There are processes going on initiated by beings; that is called *karma* leading to *visargaḥ*. This is the first definition.

The second thing is:

अधिभूतं क्षरो भाव: पुरुषश्चाधिदैवतम् ।
अधियज्ञोऽहमेवात्र देहे देहभृतां वर ॥४॥

Adhibhūtam kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaśca adhidaivatam;
Adhiyajño'hamevātra dehe dehabhṛtām vara — 8. 4

'The perishable aspect of things is the *Adhibhūta*, and the Indwelling Self is the *Adhidaivata*; I alone am the *Adhiyajña* here in this body, O best of the embodied.'

Adhibhūtam kṣaro bhāvaḥ. What is *adhibhūta*? That which is possessed of 'plain nature'; *kṣaro bhāvaḥ*, 'subject to change.' Whatever is subject to change, subject to destruction, that is called *adhibhūta*. All *bhūtas*, all nature around us, are 'subject to change', *kṣaraḥ*. Brahman is *akṣara,* the Imperishable. This *adhibhūtam* is *kṣara*. *Puruṣaḥ ca adhidaivatam, 'adhidaivatam* is the *puruṣa*, the Self.' *Adhiyajño'hamevātra; adhiyajñaḥ,* 'presiding over all sacrifices, rituals, etc.'; *aham eva*, 'I am Myself, as the Divine Self of all; I am that Reality;' *atra dehe*, 'within the body'; *dehabhṛtām vara*, 'O best among embodied beings'. I am the one that is called *adhiyajña. Atra*, 'in this very world'. I am the one who presides over all the things here in this world.

So, quoting scriptures, Śaṅkarācārya says, *yajño vai viṣṇuḥ*, '*yajña,* verily is Viṣṇu', that Divine Reality. When you just see it in a particular context, you will merely see *yajña* or fire sacrifice, but when you look at it from a deeper perspective, you will find ultimately it means that infinite Divine reality.

So, we see that the eighth chapter begins with Śrī Kṛṣṇa answering a few questions asked by Arjuna. Many of these terms are technically used in our Vedantic tradition—*adhyātma*, *adhidaiva*, *adhibhūta,* etc.*;* all these are certain technical terms. So, based on these words, Arjuna is asking some questions and these questions were prompted by Śrī Kṛṣṇa's reference to these very ideas in the last verse of the seventh chapter.

Kim tad brahma, 'what is that Brahman?' Śrī Kṛṣṇa used this word 'Brahman'; what is that? That is the first question. *Kimadhyātmam*, 'what is the inner self?' *Adhyātma* is *adhi* plus *ātma. Kim karma,* 'what is work or *karma*?' *Puruṣottama,* 'O, Best among men'. *Adhibhūtam ca kim proktam*, 'what is *adhibhūtam?' Bhūtam* stands for both nature inside and nature outside. The eleventh chapter will be describing the Vedantic God as *bhūta-bhāvana* and *bhūteśa,* 'creator of beings and Lord of beings'. *Adhidaivam kimucyate*, 'what is that which is called *adhidaivam'*, those divinities in nature whom our people saw; what is this *adhidaivam*?

Then, *adhiyajñaḥ katham ko'tra*, 'what is *adhiyajña*?' *Yajña* is sacrifice; what is that which presides over sacrifice. *Dehe'smin*, 'within this body'; *madhusūdana,* 'O Kṛṣṇa'; *prayāṇakāle ca katham jñeyo'si niyatātmabhiḥ*, and finally, 'how do people with discipline over inner life know You at the time of death?' *Prayāṇakāle*, 'at the time of death', how do they remember the Divine? These were the questions of Arjuna in two verses.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa begins the answer. First, what is Brahman? *Akṣaram brahma paramam*, 'the Supremely Imperishable Reality is Brahman.' There is this perishable universe. There is also the Imperishable behind the perishable; that is Brahman.

This is expounded in a beautiful passage in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*—Yājñavalkya expounding the subject in a conference of scholars. Gārgī was a woman philosopher. Yājñavalkya says to her, *etat akṣaram gārgī*, 'O Gārgī, this is the great Imperishable Reality'. *Akṣaram* also means alphabets *a*, *b*, *c*, *d;* that is also *akṣara*. But the real meaning is, 'that which is without *kṣara*'; *kṣara* means 'destructibility'; the infinite one is indestructible; that is the ultimate Reality or Brahman. Then, *svabhāvo'dhyātmam ucyate*, 'that Brahman existing in you and me as the Self is our *svabhāva* or inner nature, and that is called *adhyātmam*'. That

very Brahman is existing in you and me as the Self. *Bhūta bhāvodbhavakaro visargaḥ karmasamjñitaḥ*, '*karma* is action, a primordial, original process, by which this vast universe comes into manifestation'; the many coming out from the One. That whole process is known as *karma*. In English, philosophically they use the word 'process'. The world is a process; that means a continuous change is going on; that is called a process. So, *karma* is used in the sense of process. 'Process' and 'Reality'—Reality is the imperishable One. In process, it becomes the manifested universe, all the various galaxies, and later on, the planets, then nature and human beings, all come into being. That projection of all this is called *karma.* Each one of these elements is perishable. Therefore, it is called *adhibhūta,* which physics, chemistry, and all positivistic sciences study—the environment in which you and I live, including our body. Body also is an environment from the point of view of the Atman, as you will see when we will deal with the subject of death. That is why, in the *Taittirīya Samhitā,* Viṣṇu is called the *yajña. Yajṇo vai viṣṇuḥ,* 'Viṣṇu is *yajñaḥ*'. Viṣṇu and *yajña* are the same. So, in the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma,* the name of Viṣṇu is given as *yajña*. So, *aham eva adhiyajño*, 'I am indeed the *adhiyajña*'; *asmin dehe*, 'in this body'; these were the various items asked for by Arjuna.

Then comes the question: at the time of death, how do people with self-discipline, fix their minds on You and achieve spiritual liberation? The answer is given here in verse 5:

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन्मुक्त्वा कलेवरम् ।
यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः ॥५॥

Antakāle ca māmeva smaranmuktvā kalevaram;
Yaḥ prayāti sa madbhāvam yāti nāstyatra samśayaḥ — 8. 5

'And he (or she) who at the time of death, meditating on Me alone, goes forth, leaving the body, attains My Being: there is no doubt about this.'

Whoever *antakāle*, 'at the time of death'; the last moment is called *antakāla; māmeva smaran*, 'thinking of Me alone'; *muktvā kalevaram*, 'casting away one's body'. The nature of death in India means 'the soul

casting away the body': 'I am the soul; I am the Self; I am not the body; I am *in* the body; the body is *my* instrument.' So, death in India means the soul casting away its body—very often a troublesome body, which is useless for the purpose of life. Therefore, it is time to drop it away. That is the nature of death. So, *antakāle ca māmeva smaran,* at that moment of death, 'that person is thinking of Me'—Śrī Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu. *Muktvā kalevaram,* 'then he or she forsakes the body'. What happens next? *Yaḥ prayāti,* 'one who dies like this'*; sa madbhāvam yāti*, 'he or she attains to My being'. Whatever we think at the last moment of our life, that has a tremendous determining power for the future. So, in this case one who thinks of Me at the last moment, will certainly come to Me. *Nāstyatra samśayaḥ*, 'there is no doubt in regard to this matter'. This is a belief in every religion. The Christian, the Hindu, the Buddhist, all treat the moment of death as a very creative moment. All our future is based on that. You may not know clearly what the future is, but this much we know that if we keep our mind fixed on the highest, the Divine, that future is going to be bright. That is the belief. That is why at the time of death people think of God, recite *mantras,* or sing *bhajan.* We do all these, so that, that person passes away with a tremendous impression of the Divine within. Often the question is asked, how is it that that last moment *alone* determines the future? But, we must know that the capacity to lift the mind to the Divine at the last moment comes only from long experience through life. We train the mind throughout the life for the last moment; otherwise we fail to fix the mind on the Divine when we are not interested in that subject at all. So, that training makes us fit to fix the mind on the Divine at the last moment.

Sri Ramakrishna also said so, giving this illustration: An elephant, when it is given a bath, as soon as it comes out of it, sprinkles dust on its own body. That is the nature of the elephant. Similarly, we take the name of God, we become clean, and immediately after that, we start doing evil things. So, that is the nature of the human being also. But, said Sri Ramakrishna, you bathe the elephant, put him in the stable, then he won't get dusty and unclean again. At the time of death that is what happens. We are not any more embodied thereafter to commit evil; this body is not there to commit any evil; we are just clean and pure at that moment when we reject this body, and we achieve the highest. That is the belief in every religion. So,

the time of death is very important. We are not afraid of death. If our philosophy is properly understood, we will not be afraid to face death, because we know really the Self has no death, and the Divine, the *akṣara*, the Imperishable Brahman is there. We are a spark of that Divine Reality. Because of this understanding, that great practice arose in India from the Vedic times of burning the body as soon as the person is dead. That dead body has nothing more to do. The sooner it is reduced to its own chemical elements, the better. Nowhere else will you find this philosophical background of cremation. The body has done its work. It was a chemical laboratory, brought together for some life's purpose. It is no more useful. We discard it, just break it down to the elements through the touch of fire. Fire can reduce all aspects of the body back to their original elements. That is the concept of death in Indian thought.

In fact, this is a tremendous development of human thought. We think of human philosophy usually as studying only life—life and its various forms. But, very few philosophies study the nature of death. And we can't become perfect unless we know both; one must know life, and one must know death as well. That philosophy alone has depth which has probed into the nature of death. In India, from the *Ṛg-Vedic* times, we diverted our attention to the study of death also—and not only of life, and we declared the Ultimate Reality as 'that Light whose shadow is life and death', *yasya chāyā amṛtam, yasya mṛtyuḥ* (*Ṛg Veda samhita,* X. viii. 121). What a beautiful expression does one find in this *Ṛg-Vedic* utterance: whose shadow, *chāyā*, is death and immortality. That is Brahman. The same Brahman has appeared in the form of life, and in the form of death. That is why the word *kāla* means 'time'. *Kāla* also means death; the whole universe is under the control of *kāla*. Everything in this world, the world of manifestation, is subject to time and death. That *kāla* is an expression of the Divine itself. When we have this understanding, the fear of death becomes less. Normal fear in respect of death we all have, but that obsessive fear will not be there. That is the weakness of ancient Greek thought. Several writers on Greek culture have mentioned this. L. Dickinson in his *Greek View of Life* refers to this: the Greeks loved life, loved action, loved energy; everything dynamic they loved, but they could not reconcile with old age and death. And the vital energy was squeezed out of them by a force which they did not know.

They remained forever unreconciled to death; that is the limitation of the Greek thought. That is why they couldn't appreciate Socrates who understood the nature of death, that he is truly immortal, that the body alone dies and not the Self. That understanding came to Socrates, but the Greeks never understood Socrates. They threatened him, charged him with misleading the youth of his days, and made him drink poison. And that noblest Greek died at the hands of his own countrymen. Therein you see that the classical Greek culture could not understand the nature of death, could not understand that dimension which Socrates spoke of, that essentially the Self is immortal. And he expressed this truth at the time of drinking the poison. With an absolutely calm mind, serene mind, he drank the poison, consoling the people, young and old, around him. One of them, Crito, an old friend, put a question to Socrates just when he was drinking the poison. In *Dialogues of Plato* you get this picture: Crito asked Socrates, 'Socrates, how shall we bury you?'. Socrates smiled! The man who is going to die wore a gentle smile and said, 'You must first catch *me*, the *real me,* before you ask this question'. That was the first sentence he spoke. The second sentence was, 'Be of good cheer, Crito. You refer to the body; as to the body do with it as you do with other people'. The same idea you find here. When you face death, understand that death is only of the body; we merely reject the body. That means we, the Self, reject the body which has been with us as a temporary instrument of our life. So, that is the full understanding in Indian culture. In Greek culture and in modern Western culture, the subject of death was very little understood. But that is being corrected now. With the spread of Vedantic ideas, people are realising more and more the Indian thinking in regard to death. Though in Christian religion there is the thought of the soul, it has not been philosophically presented. When people die they like to have religious ceremonies, so that their mind will attain to higher levels. That has been beautifully done, but the philosophical background of this whole process is found only in India, in its Vedantic tradition.

And so, this *śloka* says here:

Antakāle ca māmeva smaran muktvā kalevaram;
Yaḥ prayāti sa madbhāvam yāti nāstyatra samśayaḥ —

‘One who passes out of life, by consciously thinking of Me at the last moment, will certainly reach Me’; *nāstyatra samśayaḥ*, ‘there is no doubt on this question.’

I have heard of many people dying with great calmness of mind, without any fear, because of their devotion to the Divine. Even in recent times, we have had many examples. One patient was lying in the bed for three months in a Calcutta hospital. He couldn’t get up; so weak was he. Doctors couldn’t diagnose the disease, but he was very weak and could not eat anything; he was just lying down. All on a sudden, at night, at about three o’clock, he managed to sit up on the bed. How he managed it is a wonder; even the nurses couldn’t explain it. And then, looking left and right, he said, ‘Are you awake, any of you?’ In Bengali he continued, ‘I’m going, I’m going’, he said. Then he looked around and said, ‘Mother, you have come, you have come. I am coming, I am coming.’ Saying thus, he dropped down and died. It impressed all the nurses who were still awake and working there. What a beautiful way of dying! And such cases of death are plenty.

So, there is such a thing as living the life. That is beautiful. We are not going to run after death all the time; we are running after life. But death also is a fact of life. We must reconcile to it. We must understand it. Don’t be frightened by it. That is a great idea. The heroic attitude to life will accept both life and death.

In Swami Vivekananda’s literature, you find this idea that one who can hug the bosom of death, to such a one the Divine Mother comes. If you only take life and not death, you see only half of the Reality. The full Reality needs life and death. Those people who have understood the nature of death and have the courage to face death, only they can become great. Those who run only after life, their life will be only half well-lived, with the other half of life absolutely untouched.

Here is the statement therefore: live a life of activity, working hard, like the Greeks, and yet understanding that, really there is no death for oneself; it is the body that dies. So, the crucial time has come, I am going to face death. O, Death, you have come! I am here to greet you as a friend. That kind of attitude and fearlessness will come out of this kind of understanding

of the nature of life and death. In the *Īśā Upaniṣad,* the last four verses refer to the death of a sage who had lived a good life. Now, he is facing death. His words are uttered there in that section. 'Let me realize that Supreme Reality, behind the Sun, behind the universe. I have lived my life. Now death has come. Let this body be dissolved into its components through the agency of fire. O, mind, think of the good deeds you have done.' Saying this, he quietly passes away. So, from very ancient times, this attitude towards the problem of death has been with us and we have got so many stories also in this connection. We have also made Time a person! *Kāla*, also called Yama, means 'the one who takes away life at the time of death'. *Kāla* actually means time, but it has been made mythical in the form of a particular person who comes to everyone. Nobody is left out at all. So, take account of *kālā*. *Kāla* is a Reality. The sun, the moon, the stars, all of them are subject to *kāla*. *Kāla* rules everything. And in the eleventh chapter, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa shows His universal form, He himself will declare (11. 32), *kālo'smi lokakṣayakṛtpravṛddho*, 'I am the mighty world-destroying Time, I am here to destroy this world.' Every moment it is running to destruction. It is going on all the time; only we don't understand it; we don't look at it in that light; we are afraid of it, and therefore, we avoid it. That is how we have been viewing it; that makes us weak. Why don't we face facts as they are? Death is a fact. Why not face it? That makes for heroism. A nation afraid of death can never be a nation of heroes. One alone who can face death can become a hero. You can see this in the West, though they never understood this higher dimension of death, but they have shown fearlessness with respect to death. They are prepared to die for the glory of their people, of their nation. Therefore, they built up great empires and became powerful. We in India lost that greatness in our society. So afraid of death are we that we are not allowed even to mention the word 'death' in our society, in our families, etc. That is why we became smaller and smaller. When I was a boy, whenever I referred to the word 'death' my people would say, 'Shut up, don't say anything about it!' They were closing their eyes to Reality; that is not the way to become great. Face the truth, face the fact; it is a proven fact in front of you.

Therefore, this Vedanta includes not only life but also death. That is why it has a completeness; it has comprehended Reality in its fullness.

Otherwise, it becomes one-sided. The weakness of Greek culture was that one-sidedness. We understood death and the result was, we began to run after it in various ways neglecting life that was in front of us! We neglected life, and the result was that we became politically weak, socially weak, economically weak. So, we shall have to emphasize both life and death. Greek culture and Indian culture must play together to create a total culture, a human culture, under a comprehensive philosophy and spirituality, which is our Vedanta. That is the work that Swami Vivekananda did in the modern age: inaugurating a wonderful harmony of East and West. And so, these are beautiful ideas which refer to many aspects of human life and destiny, to various aspects of human culture.

Similarly, others may think of other Divine aspects. After all that Brahman is One, but It can assume any number of forms to satisfy the craving of the devotees. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa doesn't stop with saying, 'those who think of Me, they achieve Me.' You may think of any Divine Reality, and still you will achieve that Reality. That is why in Sanskrit they say, *bhaktānām hitakāmyayā brahmaṇo rūpa kalpanā*, 'Brahman has no *rūpa* or form, but in order to serve the welfare of devotees, that Brahman assumes many forms'.

So, in verse 6, that subject comes up:

यं यं वापि स्मरन् भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः ॥६॥

Yam yam vāpi smaran bhāvam tyajatyante kalevaram;
Tam tamevaiti kaunteya sadā tadbhāva bhāvitaḥ — 8. 6

'Remembering at the end of life, whatever object (Divine Form), one leaves the body, That (Ultimate Reality) alone is reached by him or her, O son of Kuntī, (because) of one's constant thought of that object.'

Whatever may be the Divine Form that a devotee meditates upon at the time of death, he or she attains that particular Form. So, in any religion, whenever there is this kind of the lifting of the mind to a higher level and concentrating on some Divine Truth, the same result occurs. So, it is a general statement. *Yam yam vāpi smaranbhāvam tyajatyante kalevaram*,

‘those who forsake the body at the time of death by thinking of a Divine form—whatever might be the form of Divinity in front’; *tam tamevaiti kaunteya,* ‘they achieve that very divinity’. Why? *Sadā tad bhāva bhāvitaḥ*, ‘by constantly thinking of that particular *bhāva*’, the mind becomes impressed by it, and therefore, in the next life, he or she achieves that Divine Unity. This is the faith of all devotees in every religion. Therefore, that being true, in order to prepare our minds to be able to orient at the time of death in that direction, we have to practise it quite early enough. A wise person will not depend upon a chance remembrance of the Divine. He or she will try to remember Him in life always, so that he or she will remember the Divine at the time of death.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said:

तस्मात् सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मामेवैष्यस्यसंशयः ॥७॥

Tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu mām anusmara yudhya ca;
Mayyarpita mano buddhiḥ mām evaiṣyasyasamśayaḥ —8. 7

‘Therefore, at all times, constantly remember Me and fight. With the mind and intellect absorbed in Me, you shall doubtless come to Me.’

Tasmāt, ‘therefore’; *sarveṣu kāleṣu,* ‘at all times’; *mām anusmara*, ‘think of Me’; *anu* means ‘continuously’; *mām smara,* ‘think of Me’. I am the Self behind your own little self, I am the Infinite One, I am that *akṣara puruṣa*, that Imperishable Reality hidden within you. So, *tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu mām anusmara* and *yudhya ca*, ‘and carry on the battle of life!’ These two will have to go together. Thinking of the Divine, carrying on the battle of life. You are active in life; you have got plenty of work to do; *that* cannot be an excuse for not remembering the Divine. Remember the Divine is *within* you. He is the Self of your self. He is the Inner Self of *all* beings. That Divine Consciousness must be there at least a little bit in everyone; along with it, there must be the hard work going on in this world, the struggle, the endeavour, that wonderful ‘battle of life’! *Yudhya ca*. So, this is a very important exhortation in the *Gītā*: *mām anusmara yudhya ca*, ‘meditate upon Me and carry on the battle of life’. That is the language.

Anusmara, 'continuous remembrance'; *smaraṇam* is 'remembering'; *anu smaraṇam* is 'continuous remembering'. Like oil poured from one vessel to another; that oil flows in a continuous stream. That is the example given by our spiritual teachers to have an understanding of this *anu smaraṇam;* the mind flows towards the Divine continuously. A portion of the mind is always devoted to this Consciousness. Sri Ramakrishna gave the example of a person suffering from toothache. Such a person is busy with the day-to-day work, but a part of his or her mind is always on that ailing tooth. Similarly, *mām anusmara yudhya ca*, 'meditate upon Me and carry on the battle of life'. They are not opposed to each other. They can be carried on together. *That is the special message of the Gītā*. That is why it is a message for all people. We are all working people. In the midst of work can we realize the Divine? Yes, we can. The Divine is our own nature. Realizing Him is our birthright. Everybody can realize Him. That is how the supreme Divinity has been presented in the *Gītā*.

Mayyarpita mano buddhiḥ māmevaiṣyasyasamśayaḥ; 'one whose mind is fixed on Me, whose *buddhi* is fixed on Me'. *Manas* and *buddhi* 'have been fixed on Me', *mayyarpita*; *māmevaiṣyasi*, 'reach Me only'; *na samśayaḥ*, 'there is no doubt on this question'. As your thoughts are, so will your life be. Thought very much modifies life, influences life; it is a great truth, and in this case, it is perfectly true. Thinking of the Divine, we become Divine. As Sri Ramakrishna said, 'one who always thinks that he or she is a sinner, he or she will become a sinner; one who thinks that he or she is a child of the Divine, such a one will become Divine.' Mind plays a great part in building up our life one way or the other. You go on suggesting to yourself, 'I am sick, I am sick', and one day you will fall sick, because you are suggesting that to yourself. Mind has the great power to shape our destiny. Therefore, never think of negative thoughts; take always to positive thoughts. And the greatest positive thought is of the Divine hidden in the heart of all, the Imperishable in the midst of the perishable.

How do we do so?

अभ्यासयोगयुक्तेन चेतसा नान्यगामिना ।
परमं पुरुषं दिव्यं याति पार्थानुचिन्तयन् ॥८॥

Abhyāsa yoga yuktena cetasā nānyagāminā;
Paramam puruṣam divyam yāti pārtha anucintayan — 8. 8

‘With the mind not moving towards anything else, made steadfast by the method of habitual meditation, and dwelling on the Supreme Resplendent *Puruṣa*, O son of Pṛthā, one goes to Him.’

This is the way to achieve that Highest Reality. *Abhyāsa yoga yuktena*, ‘through *abhyāsa yoga*, *yoga* of constant practice’. With that *abhyāsa yoga*; *cetasā*, ‘with such a mind’; *nānyagāminā*, ‘with the mind not going elsewhere’. *Paramam puruṣam divyam yāti*, such a one ‘achieves that supreme *Puruṣa*, the Divine’. How? *Anu cintayan*, ‘by constantly thinking of that Reality’. We begin in a small way, but by habit and practice we make it a pervasive life-endeavour. Mind is always connected with the Divine; a portion of the mind rests in the Divine. That is what Sri Ramakrishna said, ‘You have two hands. With one hand do the work of the world; with the other hand hold on to the feet of God. When the work at hand is over, with both hands hold on to the feet of God.’ That is the language he used.

Then a beautiful description of the Divine is given in the next two verses, 9 and 10:

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

कविं पुराणं अनुशासितारं
अणोः अणीयांसम् अनुस्मरेद्यः ।
सर्वस्य धातारं अचिन्त्यरूपं
आदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ॥९॥

Kavim purāṇam anuśāsitāram
aṇoḥ aṇīyamsam anusmaredyaḥ;
Sarvasya dhātāram acintyarūpam
ādityavarṇam tamasaḥ parastāt — 8. 9

प्रयाणकाले मनसाऽचलेन
भक्त्या युक्तो योगबलेन चैव ।

भ्रुवोर्मध्ये प्राणमावेश्य सम्यक्
स तं परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम् ॥१०॥

Prayāṇakāle manasā'calena
bhaktyā yukto yogabalena caiva;
Bhruvormadhye prāṇam āveśya samyak
sa tam param puruṣam upaiti divyam — 8. 10

'The Omniscient, the Ancient, the Over-ruler, more minute than an atom, the Sustainer of all, of form inconceivable, self-luminous like the sun, and beyond the darkness of *Māyā*, one who meditates on Him thus, at the time of death, full of devotion, with the mind unmoving, and also by the Power of *Yoga*, fixing the whole *Prāṇa* betwixt the eyebrows, such a one goes to that Supreme Resplendent *Puruṣa*.'

These are very beautiful verses meant for daily prayer. Very often people use this in their prayers. In the first word, the Divine is described as *kavi*, 'a poet'. Actually, it means a *krānta darṣī*, 'one who can see far and deep'; it means 'the omniscient One'. Why Brahman is called omniscient? Because Brahman is the all, therefore It is omniscient. See the language. If I am not the all, how can I know the all? Because I am the all, I am omniscient; that is the nature of God. Take for example, the sun in the solar system. We can say the sun is omniscient with respect to the entire solar system. His radiation penetrates everywhere revealing what is what; nothing is hidden from the sun. Similarly Brahman, which is the Light of all lights, the Light of pure Consciousness, is the all. It is in everything. Naturally, It knows everything. So, omniscience is possible only because of being that One in all. That is the idea. It is exactly as we speak in respect of the sun. Even in the most remote corner of a rocky cave, there is the sun's penetration. It knows what is going on there. If you credit sun with consciousness, you can say that the sun knows everything. Sun is everything; therefore, it knows everything. Similarly, Brahman is everything, Brahman knows everything. The word *kavi,* therefore, is a very beautiful word applied to the Divine. In the *Īśā Upaniṣad* also, this word occurs when dealing with the ultimate Reality. *Kavi* and also *kāvya*, 'the poet and the poetry'. In our day-to-day life, the poet is also great because of

that. A poet can penetrate much more than an average mind. *Kavi* can go deeper, and therefore, he is called a poet; he is called a *kavi,* a *krānta darṣī*. Men like Shelley and others will say poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. They can see things clearly, and then present things beautifully, and so they attract us. Even today how deeply poetry attracts the human mind in every language. Sanskrit is full of such beautiful poetry. Upaniṣads themselves are full of such poetry. Take for example, this verse in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* declaring Brahman as 'the Light of all lights', *jyotiṣām jyotiḥ.* The light of the electric light gives us light here, but behind it we have got the solar energy. Then there are also the other stars. These are all lights, but there is a Light that lights up all this universe. The Light of all lights—that is how Atman or Brahman is described in that verse (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* II. ii. 15):

Na tatra sūryo bhāti na candra tārakam
nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yam agniḥ ;
Tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam
tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti—

'In that infinite Atman, the sun does not illumine, nor the moon, nor the stars, nor the light in our own household; that Light shines and, following It, these lights shine. Through that Light the whole world is lighted.'

It is 'the Light of all lights'. What a poetic expression of a profound truth: *tasya bhāsā sarvamidam vibhāti*, 'by Its Light, the whole world is lighted'. The sun and the moon get light only from Brahman. It is the Light of all lights. Now this is how poetry uses not only the knowledge of fact, but also knowledge of meaning and value. It makes us penetrate into the heart of things, and not merely see the surface. Because of the Light of all lights, *kavita* or poetry finds a little expression in the *kavis* or poets in our mundane world. Poetry in every language is highly commended. In fact, early literature in all languages was all poetry. Prose came much later. Even in prose what appeals to you is the poetical element. A beautiful prose is poetic, truly speaking. The only literature which is entirely prosaic is the law court registration material; the most prosaic literature you find there. But in every other type of prose, if there is anything attractive to you, there is a poetic element there.

So, *kavim*, is the first word, then we have *purāṇam*, 'the most ancient'. The most ancient is the Divine. Everything else came later. Śaṅkarācārya also gives the meaning to the word *purāṇa* as *purā api nava eva iti purāṇaḥ*, 'though ancient, it is always fresh', always new. That is another meaning of *purāṇam*. Take India for example. An ancient culture but every time it is new, ancient and yet not old, but new. What a beautiful idea! Dr. Brajendranath Seal of Calcutta, a fellow student of Swami Vivekananda, and the author of the book: *Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus,* has described India as ever-ageing, but never old. That is India, that is called *purāṇa*.

Next, anuśāsitāram, 'the ruler of the whole universe'. Through His law, the whole world is regulated. Then it goes on circling around; so also the galaxies and everything else. The law of nature is coming from that Reality that is behind nature. *Aṇoraṇīyāmsam*, 'smaller than an atom', subtle and subtler among all subtle things. *Anusmaredyaḥ*, 'one who meditates upon this truth'; *sarvasya dhātāram*, 'the base of everything in the world'. That which supports everything in the world is this Reality. As Sri Ramakrishna said, God is like the '1' that gives value to '0'. Put a number of '0's but without the '1' there is no value. That '1' gives value. One gives value to many. Take the one away and there is nothing but zero. So, that is why God is called *sarvasya dhātāram*. *Acintyarūpam*, 'unthinkable'; you cannot bring it to the realm of thought; beyond thinking is this Reality, because it is pure being. *Áditya varṇam*, 'luminous like the sun', glorious and luminous like the sun. *Tamasaḥ parastāt*, 'beyond all darkness and delusion'.

Such a Reality, *prayāṇakāle*, 'at the time of *prayāṇa* or death'; *manasā acalena*, 'with an unshakeable mind'. We fix the steady mind on this Reality at the time of death. *Bhaktyā yukto*, 'endowed with devotion'; *yogabalena caiva*, 'also with the strength of *yoga*' which also supports a steady mind. *Bhruvoḥ madhye prāṇam āveśya samyak*, 'concentrating all the bio-energies that are inside, between the eyebrows, in that state'. What happens to him or her? *Sa tam param puruṣam upaiti divyam*, 'such a one realizes that supremely Divine Person'. This is a two-verse statement on this subject.

The nature of Reality has been expounded as clearly as possible in Vedanta—Brahman, from Whom the universe has come, in Whom the universe exists, and to Whom the universe returns in the end. From the One, the many came. The many exist in the One even now, and the many go back to the One in the end. That One is of the nature of pure Consciousness, infinite and non-dual. That is how the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* very rationally presents that ultimate Reality, Brahman. No word can express Its nature fully, but some word has to be used. Therefore, the word Brahman is used, and the word Brahman has the meaning of infinite expansion, something big, *bṛhatvāt brahma*, something big. So, the best word they found for the all-pervading Reality is the word Brahman or the word Atman, which is a spark of It in all of us. When the finger points towards you, that is called the Self. When the finger points outwards, that is called nature. So, this truth within is *pratyak*, and that truth outside is *parāk*. *Pratyak* means 'towards your own Self'. So, this is called the Atman or also *pratyagātman*, and Vedanta says, Atman and Brahman are one and the same Reality. That One caught up in the mind-body complex is the Atman; really, It is that infinite Brahman. So, Vedanta and Swami Vivekananda presents this knowledge with as much rational presentation as possible, because It is not *entirely* presentable to reason or to sensory verification. However, a good deal can be done to make one realize that there is such a Reality. The essential thing is realization: 'I have realized Brahman; I have realized the Atman'. *That is the nature of this truth presented by Vedanta. Śṛuti*, *yukti, anubhava*, Śaṅkarācārya says, when dealing with the ultimate Reality. We need three sources of knowledge. One is *śruti*, the experience of earlier sages, collected in books like the Upaniṣads; *yukti*, our own clear reason, reasoning on these various experiences; and finally, our own *anubhava*, our own experience to confirm, 'yes, that is true; I also have realized that truth'. *Śruti*, *yukti* and *anubhava* go together in our philosophy and spiritual life.

So, sa tam param puruṣam upaiti divyam, 'such a one achieves that supreme *Puruṣa*, the Divine One' at the time of death, because he or she has trained the mind in appreciating this truth. The whole life has been lived with a spiritual orientation. Religion can be done as a weekly affair! But, spirituality cannot; it is a constant affair. Our own true nature is constant, but religious acts and rituals one can do occasionally. That is why one is

asked to go to church on Sundays; all the other six days we are not concerned with the church. We also have the same idea, going to a temple for a particular occasion. All that is religion, but spirituality is different—one's awareness of one's own true nature as a spark of the Divine. Behind the body-mind complex, behind the muscle, behind the nervous system, behind the psyche, is that infinite Atman, ever pure, ever free. That is our nature. This has been expressed again and again in the *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads and in Śaṅkarācārya's writings also. Today, in the Vivekananda literature, you get plenty of this message. Religious books describe this ritual and that. One may or may not do the prescribed rituals; it is up to you to do or not to do. Still you are a member of that religion. But spirituality is what essentially pertains to you, your own true nature, your real 'I'. That is where this teaching becomes absolutely relevant. Nobody is beyond spirituality, everybody is spiritual. We say in India, therefore, 'I don't believe in a God sitting in the sky, creating the world; I am an atheist.' We never condemn such people because he or she may be spiritual, though may not be religious. He or she may not believe in a particular idea of God, but may have high character, have compassion, may be doing service to people. These show that he or she is aware of the presence of the Divine within, behind the tiny ego. *That* is spirituality. Whenever you go one step beyond this ego, you are one step nearer to the Lord. That is spirituality. So, a life of service and dedication is spirituality. Therefore, none is beyond the domain of spirituality. One can easily go beyond the dos and don'ts of religion, and be on the road to spirituality. So, Swami Vivekananda said in this context, 'I do not call anyone a Hindu who is not spiritual.' You may not be religious, but you must be spiritual; that is the nature of this growth and development. This genetically centred ego or self of mine is transformed into my larger Self, which feels one with you and one with all. That is spiritual growth, the beginning of spiritual life. That is how a person, towards the end of his or her life, will be able to experience all these beautiful truths which are mentioned here. Work, joy and comfort, everything remains, but all in the context of this wonderful truth.

Śaṅkarācārya says in his Upaniṣad commentary: 'take away the Atman from the world, the world becomes a zero', *tat ātmanām vimuktaḥ jagat asat sampadyate*. I shall not separate the Atman from the world. That is

called spirituality; the One behind the many in every action, every endeavour, every relationship. I stress this awareness of the Atman that makes me capable of establishing happy relations with other people, because it is the same Atman in every being; therefore, this is called spirituality. There is nothing magical or mystical about it. It is a living experience for every human being. It is *anubhava svarūpa,* 'of the nature of *anubhava*'. You can experience it in day-to-day activities. The housewife, who remains busy the whole day in the house, can be deeply spiritual with the awareness of the Divine within. We are not thinking of some gods sitting in the sky far away.

So, this is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa mentions here: we build up our life in this way, then finally death comes, the mind becomes easily fixed on that infinite Reality, Brahman, and we realize our oneness with It when the body is cast away; this is the language. We are *not* the body, we *have* a body. The second chapter already told us that: when the cloth becomes old and torn, we throw it away and put on a new cloth. That is the nature of the human body with respect to our own true Self. These are two beautiful verses, often used for prayer and meditation.

And so, in the eighth chapter, we are dealing with these subjects. Later on, will come cosmology, the infinite age of the universe, which will be echoed in modern cosmology. That we shall come to later on.

Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the tenth verse, what happens when you realize this truth at the time of death.

Prayāṇakāle manasā'calena
Bhaktyā yukto yogabalena caiva;

At the time of *prayāṇa*, 'death'; *manasā acalena*, 'with a steady mind'; *bhaktyā yukto*, 'endowed with devotion'; *yogabalena caiva*, 'and also with *yogabala*'; due to the practice of concentration throughout life, you develop *yogabala*. It is a remarkable concept of *bala* or strength. *Mahābhārata* speaks of three types of strength available to human beings. First is *bāhubalam*, physical strength; by pushing and pulling things, children develop *bāhubala*. But that is very ordinary, the bull has more *bāhubala* than we have; the horse has more than that; a rocket has still more. So,

bāhubala is the first stage of human strength, human power. Second is unique to human beings: *buddhibalam*, strength from thinking, from the mind, from the intellect, from reason. There the human being is supreme; but that is not the highest. There is something higher still; and that is the greatest contribution of Indian thought. *Buddhibalam* is not the highest; brilliant minds might be very ordinary in normal day-to-day human life. A third source of strength is there. That we call *yogabalam* or *ātmabalam*. *Bāhubalam, buddhibalam* and *yogabalam.* That *yogabalam* comes from realizing one's own spiritual nature, which is a source of infinite strength. Even the strength at the body level and at the *buddhi* level generally comes from the Atman. So, when you realize the Atman, your strength becomes infinite. This is *yogabalam* or *ātmabalam*. If, from our childhood, we can develop daily all these three strengths together, it will be ideal growth. We do need physical exercise and nourishing food by which you develop *bāhubalam*. Strong, steady human beings we become; what Vivekananda called 'muscles of iron and nerves of steel'. We need young people like that in India and everywhere else. He said, 'we have weakened our body a good deal; we have neglected it'. So, we need today *bāhubalam*. Along with it must come *buddhibalam*. Go to school, get education; study, *think for yourself*, strengthen your intellect, your reason, your mind. And, along with these, try to realize a bit of the spiritual nature within you. Manifest that strength also. Little by little, from childhood onwards try to develop the spiritual side also. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa meant here when he said, *yoga balena caiva*. *A total education will help a human being to develop all these three dimensions of strength.* And that last dimension—*yogabalam* or *ātmabalam*—is the real strength. It alone can make you withstand the pressures of human life, and those pressures are plenty in today's society, breaking our nervous system, our psychic system, resulting in high tension, high stress. All that can be conquered only by a bit of that *yogabalam* or *ātmabalam*. And high character can come only from *ātmabalam*, not through *buddhibalam*. *Buddhibalam* is extremely susceptible to corruption, but, with a little *ātmabalam,* you can overcome all these weaknesses and develop an incorruptible character. So, children must develop all the three strengths. This third is needed only in small doses. The lower the type of energy, the more quantity you need. The higher the energy, the less the quantity you need. You don't need spiritual energy in much quantity. It is

the quality which we value. Therefore, when we develop a little spirituality, we are able to stand and face the world. We become truly free. Nobody can frighten us; nobody can enslave us any more. That is spiritual freedom. A child must experience that spiritual freedom and respect the same freedom in others as well. That is the importance of that third strength—*yogabalam*. A little of it is enough to stabilise a human life. Remove all the pettiness, these quarrels and fights we find in our society. And make for a peaceful social order. What a beautiful conception! Inter-human cooperation, happy relations with each other, happy family life, all these can come only with a little bit of that *yogabalam*. Not by brain power only, *buddhibalam*. The brainy people are the worst people today. All the evil and weakness of the society come from brainy people. All corruption, most social conflicts, come from brainy people. From that alone we can realize that we have to go deeper than *buddhi* (which Śaṅkarācārya describes as *nediṣṭham brahma,* 'nearest to Brahman') to get a new source of strength which can stabilise our external life. That is the theoretical and practical significance of *yoga balam* or *ātma balam*.

In the body there are many organs. A big organ is the liver; much secretion the liver and other organs produce, but the pituitary and some other internal glands, situated in the brain somewhere, produce only a little trace secretion, but that trace secretion makes for the balance of this physical system and the mind! The beautiful harmony within this physical system comes from a bit of this and some other trace secretions. That is why quantity is not important, quality is. So, muscle is quantity, *buddhi* is quality and Atman is supreme quality. That is why this word *yogabalam* is used here. Śaṅkarācārya's commentary says, 'when you practise this kind of *yogabalam* from childhood, at the time of death it will stand you in very good stead; the tremendous power of *yoga* will sustain you there by not getting the mind drawn to everything around.' That strength is available to everyone. If you don't do it from the beginning, from childhood itself, it will not be so easy to get it just towards the end at the time of death. Don't wait, therefore, for the end. Begin with *yoga* practices at the beginning of life itself. A parallel development of *bāhubalam*, *buddhibalam*, and *yogabalam* is needed.

Bhruvoḥ madhye prāṇam āveśya samyak, 'concentrating all the *prāṇas* in the body between the eyebrows', that is the *ājñā cakra*, the sixth centre of psychic consciousness. If you pass away in that state, you realize the highest. *Sa tam param puruṣam upaiti divyam*, 'he or she attains oneness with that Supreme *Puruṣa*, that imperishable Reality called Brahman. That is the meaning of these two verses; and now we enter into verse eleven.

यदक्षरं वेदविदो वदन्ति
विशन्ति यद्यतयो वीतरागाः ।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति
तत्ते पदं संग्रहेण प्रवक्ष्ये ॥११॥

Yadakṣaram vedavido vadanti
viśanti yat yatayo vītarāgāḥ;
Yadicchanto brahmacaryam caranti
tatte padam samgraheṇa pravakṣye — 8. 11

'What the knowers of the Vedas speak of as the Imperishable, what the self-controlled (*Sannyāsins*), freed from attachment enter into, and to gain which goal they live the life of a *Brahmacārin*, that I shall declare unto you in brief.'

'I shall now tell you that supreme state', that is qualified by all these other statements here. What is that supreme state? *Yadakṣaram vedavido vadanti*, 'one syllable which the knowers of Vedas declare'. That is *Om*, the *praṇava. Viśanti yat yatayo vītarāgāḥ*, 'attained by those who overcome *rāga* or attachments'. Similarly, *yadicchanto brahmacaryam caranti*, 'in order to realize which, people live as *brahmacarins*' under their *gurus* in the *gurukula*. Their aim is this: 'I am a *brahmacārin*. Why? Because I want to attain to that highest Truth.' *Brahmacarya* has no meaning unless it is a means to this great realization. *Tatte padam samgraheṇa pravakṣye*, 'that state I shall tell you in brief'. That is what we call *Om*. A similar verse occurs in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* adding *om iti etat,* 'this is *Om*' (I. ii. 15). What is *Om?* It is the supreme symbol of the Divine, the best symbol of that ultimate Reality, which is both *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa*, Impersonal as well as Personal. It is a symbol. It is called a symbol (*pratīka*), just like an image

(*pratimā*). You worship the *Īśvara*, the Personal form of Reality, in an image. It is not the *Īśvara*; it is the best image you can have to denote that wonderful Reality. So, Śaṅkarācārya calls it, *om śabda vācyam, om śabda pratīkam ca*, in his *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* commentary. *Om śabda* is the *vācyam*, just the word to express the meaning; the meaning is something else. It is the word only. And it is the *pratīka*, only the symbol of that ultimate Reality. This *Om* is taken up in all our traditions in India. Every religion that developed in India has *Om* as the supreme Name of the Divine. The *Guru Granth Sāhib* of Guru Nanak begins with this *Omkāra*, that Supreme *Puruṣa* who is *Omkāra*. All the spiritual traditions in India take *Omkāra* as the best symbol of the Supreme Reality. It is slowly entering into Indian Christianity also, though with some difficulty. Some opposition is there. Orthodox people are against it. Other Christians, the mystical-minded Christians, take *Om* as a symbol of the highest Reality, both Personal and Impersonal. And they have this justification for it: because in Saint John's Gospel it is expressed as 'the Word'. 'In the beginning was the Word'; that Word for the Supreme Brahman is *Om*. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, the Word was God, and the Word became flesh', became incarnated as the Divine. Because of this John's Gospel, which is a mystical-oriented Gospel, Indian Christians, who are developing a spiritual attitude, are slowly introducing this universal symbol of the highest Reality, *Om*. Of course, in the West they are very fond of it. All those who have studied Indian literature are very devoted to this word *Om* as the supreme Name and Symbol of the Divine. And so, this is how we try to realize that which is beyond speech, beyond thought, beyond name and form. And the minimum name we give to That is *Om*. We also call it *praṇava*. The whole universe has come from this *Om.* It is called *śabda brahman*, 'Brahman in the form of sound'. What a beautiful expression, *śabda brahman* and *para brahman,* Supreme Brahman.*Śabda brahman* expresses *para brahman*. You realize *para brahman* through *śabda brahma.* The next two verses describe how one should depart at the time of death:

सर्वद्वाराणि संयम्य मनो हृदि निरुध्य च ।
मूर्ध्न्याधायात्मनः प्राणमास्थितो योगधारणाम् ॥१२॥

Sarva dvārāṇi samyamya mano hṛdi nirudhya ca;

Mūrdhnyādhāyātmanaḥ prāṇam āsthito yoga dhāraṇām—8. 12

ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म व्याहरन्मामनुस्मरन् ।
यः प्रयाति त्यजन्देहं स याति परमां गतिम् ॥१३॥

Omityekākṣaram brahma vyāharan mām anusmaran;
Yaḥ prayāti tyajan deham sa yāti paramām gatim — 8. 13

'Controlling all the senses, confining the mind in the heart, drawing the *prāṇa* into the head, occupied in the practice of concentration, uttering the one-syllabled "*Om*", the Brahman, and meditating on Me—one who so departs, leaving the body, attains the Supreme Goal.'

In verses 12 and 13 you find this teaching given: *Sarva dvārāṇi samyamya mano hṛdi nirudhya ca*. How to meditate on the Divine and realise that Divine? All the various 'doorways', *dvārāṇi,* in the physical system are called the sense organs; they are called *dvāras*, 'openings'. Here is a door, it is an opening to the world outside. The human body is called 'a city'. It has so many openings leading out into the world. Eyes, nose, etc., all these *pañca* or five *indriyas* are called *dvāras*. So, *sarva dvārāṇi samyamya*, 'disciplining all the five *dvāras*'; you *have* the power to do it. All character, morality, ethics, all these come when men and women exercise their capacity to discipline these sensory *dvāras* or openings. *Mano hṛdi nirudhya ca*, 'and fixing the mind in the heart', in the lotus of the heart. Heart is a particular area in the yogic language. There are in this body in its spinal system seven lotuses or centres, *cakras*, as they are called. The third *cakra* is below the navel, and two others are further below. The fourth *cakra*, *anāhata*, is the heart *cakra.* That is the place for meditation. So, fix the mind in that lotus of the heart which is called the *anāhata cakra*. *Mūrdhnyādhāya ātmanaḥ prāṇam*, 'all the *prāṇa* energies within the body are to be concentrated between the eyebrows', in the *ajñā cakra*; *āsthito yoga dhāraṇām*, 'in that state you are in *yoga';* you have perfectly centred all the psychic energies in that state.

Omityekākṣaram brahma vyāharan, 'reciting this single word Brahman, *Om*'; *mām anusmaran*, and along with that 'meditating on Me', the one Divine Self in all, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling here; *yaḥ prayāti tyajan deham*,

‘one who thus leaves the body’; *sa yāti paramām gatim*, ‘he or she attains the highest state’. People *can* give up body through *yoga*. So many instances are there, but it cannot be done easily. A long practice is needed. So, in a state of *yoga,* the body is thrown away. Actually, we renounce the body because it is unfit to serve life’s purposes. That is why we always speak of *tyajan deham,* ‘renouncing the body’. You are not the body. You have it for a temporary purpose; now that it is done, you throw it away. So, the capacity to die in a very peaceful steady manner is a capacity we develop throughout our life so that, at the last moment, we are not at all in distraction but steady in the thought of Brahman.

‘The world may weep, but I shall be smiling’, that will be the attitude of such a dying person. That is the expression uttered by, I think, the Hindi poet Tulsi Das, telling the mind, ‘when you were born, you wept and the world laughed; when you die, you will smile and the world will weep for you’. You have lived such a great life, the world will weep for you, but you depart smiling absolutely. That is what happened in the case of Socrates also.

अनन्यचेता: सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यश: ।
तस्याहं सुलभ: पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिन: ॥१४॥

Ananyacetāḥ satatam yo mām smarati nityaśaḥ;
Tasyāham sulabhaḥ pārtha nityayuktasya yoginaḥ — 8. 14

‘I am easily attainable by that ever-steadfast *yogī* who remembers Me constantly and daily, with a single mind, O Pārtha.’

Verse 14 tells that: *Ananyacetāḥ satatam yo mām smarati*, ‘those who remember Me with a one-pointed mind’; *ananyacetāḥ*, ‘mind goes only towards Me’, nothing else. That is called *ananyacetāḥ. Satatam*, ‘constantly’; *mām smarati nityaśaḥ*, ‘remembers Me daily’; *tasyāham sulabhaḥ pārtha*, ‘to such a person, O Arjuna, I am easy to realize’; *sulabhaḥ* means ‘easily available’. Why? *Nityayuktasya yoginaḥ*, ‘he or she is a *yogī* who is *nityayukta*, constantly in *yoga* state’. Not occasionally. By long and continued practice, the very life becomes a *yoga* practice. Some

people have attained that kind of state. We study about them in some ancient and modern books.

Then, verse 15 says:

मामुपेत्य पुनर्जन्म दुःखालयमशाश्वतम् ।
नाप्नुवन्ति महात्मानः संसिद्धिं परमां गताः ॥१५॥

Mām upetya punarjanma duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam;
Nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ samsiddhim paramām gatāḥ—8. 15

'Reaching the highest perfection and having attained Me, the great-souled ones are no more subject to rebirth (in the world)—which is the home of pain, and is ephemeral.'

Mām upetya, 'when you attain Me'; *punarjanma*, 'this rebirth', ceases for you. What is this rebirth? *Duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam,* 'the home of pain and ephemeral'. That is the nature of human life—so much sorrow along with some pleasure and comfort. Because we do not know anything higher, we think this is first class living. But when we know there is something higher, we understand that this is not first class at all. We are satisfied with what we are; we don't want to change. In this human body we get pleasure. In a pig body also there is pleasure. Ask a pig, 'do you want to change your body?', and it will say, 'no, I am very fine here!' Everybody is caught up in that particular attitude, not knowing that infinite freedom is awaiting us from the realization of the Atman behind the body.

The word *duḥkhālayam* does not mean there is no joy. There is joy, there is pleasure. In fact, there has been a study on this subject in both East and West. Is life more pleasure or more sorrow? Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, in his scholarly two-volume book, *Gītā Rahasya,* discusses this subject. People say, 'if you think the world is full of sorrow, you are a pessimist!' The opposite is 'optimist'. But, if you know the truth of life, there is no question of pessimism or optimism; it is just *the* truth about the nature of the world and of human life.

In the course of the discussion on the subject in this book, Tilak says (vol. 1, p. 145):

‘It is stated in Mohammedan history that, during the Mohammedan rule in Spain, a just and powerful ruler named Abdul Rahiman the Third, had kept a diary of how he spent his days and, from that diary, he ultimately found that, in a rule of 50 years, he had experienced unalloyed happiness only for 14 days. …’

Tilak also puts the subject in the form of a ratio (144–5):

enjoyment of happiness
desire for happiness

‘But this is such a queer fraction that its denominator, namely, the desire for happiness, is always increasing in a greater measure than its numerator, namely, the enjoyment of happiness. So that, if this fraction is, in the beginning 1/2, it becomes later on 3/10, that is to say, if the numerator increases three times, the denominator increases five times.’

I have earlier referred to the American Hoover Committee Report saying, there are no new desires which will not give way to newer desires as soon as they are satisfied. On the other hand, all progress comes only from dissatisfaction, says Queen Vidula to her princely son, Sañjaya (*Mahābhārata, Udyoga Parva,* 132–33): *Santoṣa vai sukham hanti,* ‘contentment destroys worldly happiness’.

British thinker, John Stuart Mill, also refers to this subject in his book *Utilitarianism* (p. 14, 1907):

‘It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is because they only knew their own side of the question.’

Many people say, if you calculate pleasure and pain in society, pain and sorrow predominate, and not joy or pleasure. Joy and pleasure are there, but what predominates is sorrow. A young man or woman cannot understand that. After seventy or eighty, when he or she looks back, he or she can ask that question, ‘What was the nature of my life? Was it all joy or sorrow, or more of joy or more of sorrow?’ Thinkers have done it. So, it is not pessimism or optimism. What is the truth about life? The truth is what you find mentioned by the *Gītā* here in *duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam.* When you

have this body, you have so many pressures. The whole world is pressing upon you. You are trying to resist it, to be yourself. So, joy comes, sorrow comes, suffering comes, tensions come, all sorts of problems come. All these put together is what we repeat in our society as, *samsāra* is *tāpatraya,* 'worldly life is made of threefold misery'; that is the language. Every Hindu knows these words, *samsāra* and *tāpatraya;* everybody utters it. But the truth is: Yes, there is a majority of suffering, less of pleasure and comfort and happiness, but yet it is worth living; that also comes in our teaching. It is worth living because, as Vedanta puts it, through pleasure and pain, we can achieve our spiritual evolution; sometimes pain will help you better than pleasure in spiritual evolution. That is a wonderful teaching.

In Swami Vivekananda's lectures, you find this subject discussed: that the Hindu sages placed before men and women this great objective, that life's objective is not pleasure, is not pain, but spiritual knowledge—gaining knowledge by squeezing pleasure and pain. You try to get knowledge by discriminating, by thinking about it, by reflecting on it; then you get knowledge out of it. And, very often, pain gives you more knowledge than pleasure. That is human experience also. In this way, we go beyond pain and pleasure. Whether there is more pain or more pleasure is not the question. The human mind is set to a high purpose; it takes one beyond both pain and pleasure and then makes one realise the infinite Atman, the Divine, which is beyond all these dualities of pain and pleasure. You go beyond them both as Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say. These are all related to each other, pain and pleasure. If you have one, you must have the other also. Life cannot be all pleasure; there will be pain. Life cannot be all pain; there will also be pleasure. These are dualities, *dvandva,* in the *Gītā's* language. If you have one, you get the other also. You can't expect only one to be with you. Heat and cold, for example, always go together. If you have heat, you will have cold also. Both opposites are there around us.

And so, Vedanta teaches all to take life *as it is*. Life is a combination of pleasure and pain. Whether one is more, or the other is more, is just a theoretical question. We are passing through life which involves both pleasure and pain. Don't get stuck up in either of them, that is the Vedantic teaching. Squeeze both of them and get knowledge out of them. Experience *alone* can give you knowledge. Without the experience of pain you can't

understand the world and sympathise with humanity. Unless you have starved a little, you can't understand that three hundred millions of our people are half-starving all the time. You can't have sympathy, you can't have understanding. So, utilize occasions of pain and pleasure to achieve knowledge and compassion—that spiritual expansion of the human personality. That is the Vedantic teaching. Swami Vivekananda expresses this beautifully in the first chapter of his *Karma Yoga,* which you get in the first volume of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*.

So, *mām upetya punar janma duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam; nāpnuvanti*, 'once you realize Me, no more will you be in this uncertain world of pleasure and pain', in this world of birth and death; *mahātmānaḥ*, 'such people are *mahātmās*', those whose Self is more than what is contained in the body; it has expanded and become one with all. Such a person is called a *mahātmā*. God Himself is declared to be a *mahātmā* in one of the Upaniṣads. This person also has achieved that infinite expansion of Self-awareness. *Samsiddhim paramām gatāḥ*, 'he or she has achieved supreme perfection in this very life; that is the language of the 15th verse.

The next verse deals with cosmology, the millions of years that have gone by since cosmic evolution started:

आब्रह्मभुवनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।
मामुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥१६॥

Ábrahmabhuvanāt lokāḥ punarāvartino'rjuna;
Mām upetya tu kaunteya punarjanma na vidyate — 8. 16

'All the worlds, O Arjuna, including the realm of Brahmā, are subject to return, but after attaining Me, O son of Kuntī, there is no rebirth.'

This entire universe is characterized in Vedantic terminology as *ābrahmabhuvanāt lokāḥ*, 'all the worlds from Brahmā up to a clump of grass'; all this is called *bhuvanāḥ*. That context in which things and beings exist and live, that is called *bhuvanāḥ*, 'the world'; you can say, 'the *particular* world in which a thing lives'—one is terrestrial, next is celestial, the third is stellar—these are all *bhuvanās*. So, from Brahmā—the first product of evolution—up to a clump of grass, a very ordinary thing, all this

is called *bhuvanās*. *Ábrahmabhuvanāllokāḥ*, 'beings in all these *lokās* or worlds', Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, are *punarāvartinaḥ*, 'subject to rebirth', they return again and again. Everyone of these worlds, including Brahmā, are of this nature. Imagine such a great state called Brahmā, but Brahmā also has to change; it is only a temporary position. When God projects the universe, the cosmic mind, the first product of evolution, is Brahmā; that is the language used about Brahmā, the four-headed Brahmā. But, even his position is temporary!

Our mythology presents him as a god with four heads, and he is the embodiment of the whole Veda. Veda means knowledge, the science of everything—physical and non-physical; he is the *veda-mūrti;* he is *aja*. These are our beautiful ideas, highly philosophical and spiritual, put into a mythical language; that is all. That pure Consciousness was *unmanifest* before; it became manifest first as Brahmā. He was to continue this evolution of the universe. From him the whole world is manifesting. He is also called *Hiraṇyagarbha*, 'the Golden Womb'; many worlds are there in it. So, from that Brahmā, the first manifested Reality of the universe, up to a clump of grass, all these are subject to birth and death—*punarāvartinaḥ*. But, *mām upetya tu kaunteya punarjanma na vidyate*, 'once you attain Me, the One beyond this manifestation, that *akṣaram*, that Imperishable Brahman which I am, O Arjuna, no more of rebirth is there for you'. That will be the end of rebirth, this coming and going. You go beyond cause-and-effect relation. This world is a world of cause-and-effect relation. Today we call it the world of relativity; we believed in determinism. That is the world we are caught up in. We want to go beyond it. There is a tendency in each of us to go beyond it. Why? That is our true nature. That freedom is our true nature. That finds expression in this struggle to break through this kind of determinism. 'I must be free; I must be free.' *The call of freedom is the supreme call that has come to the human being and the struggle to be free is the greatest effort of human life,* and the highest freedom is spiritual. We talk of freedom from hunger, freedom from starvation, as well as of freedom from illiteracy, ignorance, or political bondage; all these freedoms are wonderful, but the supreme freedom is spiritual. Are you spiritually free? That is what we have to seek and attain.

So, the highest freedom comes when we realize that infinite Divine which is our true nature beyond this world of relativity, beyond the world of manifestation.

Now a little more of ancient cosmology comes in verse seventeen.

सहस्रयुगपर्यन्तमहर्यद्ब्रह्मणो विदुः ।
रात्रिं युगसहस्रान्तां तेऽहोरात्रविदो जनाः ॥१७॥

Sahasra yuga paryantam aharyad brahmaṇo viduḥ;
Rātrim yuga sahasrāntām te'horātravido janāḥ — 8. 17

'They who know (the true measure of) day and night, know the day of Brahmā, which ends in a thousand *yugas*, and the night which (also) ends in a thousand *yugas*.'

We have a time scale in India which is something extraordinary. No other ancient nation had this extraordinary vision of the infinity of time, as also the infinity of space. We were never narrow and small in thinking, that the world began in 4000 BC. Our minds went beyond millions and millions of years and, in modern cosmology, we accept the same idea. Time is relative; this is a situation in which you will find yourself. We are on a tiny planet called the earth and we measure time watching the rotation of the earth on its own axis and the revolution around the sun. So, we have a day, we have a night, we have a year, all these things we have, but we don't think that it is the same thing everywhere. What you call a day and night here, might be just a second in another plane. So, we call this terrestrial time. Then we move on to celestial time. Now, the earth goes around the sun in one year, but the sun itself is going around the galactic system. That takes two hundred million years. So, this kind of differences of year from different points of view was developed by the Indian sages in ancient times and now comes the statement that for Brahmā, that cosmic mind, that first product of evolution, his time is different from your and my time. Our time unit is very ordinary, just one year, and our life time is 100 years maximum. Brahmā also has 100 years, but his hundred years are different from our hundred years. What is his hundred years? Consider his one day: the day is divided into two halves, a day and a night. In Brahmā's day, the universe

begins to evolve. And for the whole day, the evolution proceeds, and when the Brahmā's evening comes, evolution returns to its original source. The whole return story is called *pralaya*, 'the end of cosmic manifestation'. That cannot be certainly 100 years or 500 years or a 1000 years of our terrestrial time. So, Brahmā's one day is called a *kalpa*, a technical term for it. Hundreds of astronomers have discussed this subject; in the *Mahābhārata* also it is discussed; in the *Puraṇas* also it is discussed. We have called it a *kalpa*. Brahmā's one day is one *kalpa* and one night is another *kalpa*. So, this *kalpa* will constitute quite a large chunk of human years; about 432 crores of human years will constitute just a single *kalpa* of Brahmā. That is the expansive view of time.

So, the *śloka* says there is a night when the whole universe returns to the state of non-manifestation. The whole cosmos exists in two states: 1) the undifferentiated state or the unmanifested state, and 2) the differentiated state or the manifested state. That is also, to a large extent, the theory in today's cosmology. Today's astrophysics tells you that in that primordial background material, highly dense matter occupying very little space, the whole universe was contained. Then it exploded and with that explosion began the evolution of the universe. That evolution is going on still. That power of explosion is still acting upon some of the systems in the outer universe and you can study them by studying the various radio waves that come from them. So, everywhere, you will find radio astronomy developing. You cannot see them with telescopes but radio wave sensing devices can go farther than the telescope. So, that is how today's astronomy is developing the concept of time. What is the history of the universe? Not like your history, or my history; these are very ordinary. It is just like a man's hundred years life as against that of a small mosquito which lives for a day or two and dies. The mosquito's life is so ordinary. This human life is a little extraordinary but this also is ordinary when you deal with the cosmic time scale.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says *sahasra yuga paryantam*, 'one thousand *yugas* of ours'; *brahmaṇaḥ ahaḥ*, 'is a day of Brahmā'; *rātrim yuga sahasrāntām*, 'one thousand more *yugas* is called the night of Brahmā'; *te'horātravido janāḥ*, those who know these 'they are the knowers of day and night'. So, two thousand *yugas* mean one whole day of Brahmā. And 365 days like that

make one year of Brahmā; then a hundred such years make for a lifetime of Brahmā. The present Brahmā, according to ancient Indian calculation, is now 51 years old. Imagine we are given the age of Brahmā, that wonderful cosmic Reality. And all this belief is a part and parcel of our day-to-day life. In all *samkalpas*, before you perform a holy act, you repeat, 'I am doing this in the 51st year of this Brahmā, with this particular name'. That means we had an amazing mind that could go beyond the little limitations of space and time and see the vastness of both.

Everything is rotating around something else. Earth along with the other planets is rotating around the sun, but the sun also is rotating within this galaxy; the galaxy is rotating too. But what is the centre of all these rotations? We do not know. That is where we discovered the unmanifested Reality, the Brahman, the Absolute. That is what is being referred to here. And that time scale goes on up to Brahmā; time ends at the Brahmā level. If you go beyond Brahmā, you go beyond time. So, we have *both* time and eternity; eternity is the *akṣara* Brahman, the imperishable Reality of Brahman. The whole of Reality includes time *and* eternity. Time is where evolution goes on, activities go on, processes go on, beyond which is the One absolutely imperishable, changeless Reality. So, we have got *both* time and eternity as Reality; time is one aspect of it and timelessness or eternity is the other aspect. That is how we study Reality. *Kāla* is the word for time. *Kāla* is an expression of the Divine; *kāla* is therefore highly praised. Time is highly praised in the *Purāṇas*.

In the next verse Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

अव्यक्ताद्व्यक्तय: सर्वा: प्रभवन्त्यहरागमे ।
रात्र्यागमे प्रलीयन्ते तत्रैवाव्यक्तसंज्ञके ॥१८॥

Avyaktāt vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ prabhavantyaharāgame;
Rātryāgame pralīyante tatraivāvyaktasamjñake — 8. 18

'At the approach of (Brahmā's) day, all manifestations proceed from the unmanifested state; at the approach of night, they merge verily into that alone, which is called the unmanifested.'

A very beautiful expression. *Avyaktāt*, 'from the unmanifested'. *Vyakta* means 'manifested'; *avyakta* is 'unmanifested'. From the *avyakta* has come all this *vyakta* or manifest universe. All manifested things have come from the unmanifested state. That is a wonderful idea in our Sāṅkhya and Vedanta philosophies. Two aspects of Reality—manifested and unmanifested.

Take a piece of wood. You find fire in it if you rub it vigorously; you can't see the fire, you can't touch it when it is unmanifested, but the fire *is* there. By rubbing it, you will find fire coming out. So, fire unmanifested is ordinary wood, fire manifested is the fire which you and I handle. So, the whole universe has these two dimensions—*avyakta* and *vyakta—avyākṛta prakṛti* and *vyākṛta prakṛti*, or simply *prakṛti* and *vikṛti*. *Prakṛti* is primordial nature; *vikṛti* is modified nature; *vikāra* is *vikṛti*. So, these are all technical terms which Sāṅkhya and Vedanta developed to deal with cosmic phenomena. So, *avyaktāt vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ prabhavanti*, 'all *vyakti* or manifestations came out at that time from *avyakta* or unmanifested'. When? *Aharāgame*, 'at the beginning of the day' of Brahmā. *Aha* means 'day'; *āgame* means 'at the arrival of'; at such a time, these *vyakta* realities appeared from the *avyakta* Reality. Then what happened? *Rātryāgame*, 'when (Brahma's) night approaches', Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *pralīyante*, 'the manifest universe becomes dissolved'; *pralaya* means 'dissolution'; *tatraiva avyakta samjñake*, 'in that same *avyakta*'.

So, these are the two aspects of creation. A pulsation taking us out, a pulsation taking us in. How does the solar system get imploded and go back to that primordial state? That we study in today's cosmology. At a certain future time—now it is 10 to 11 thousand million years of time since the explosion; after another 5 or 6 thousand million years—the sun will expand itself and swallow each one of these planets. A wonderful happening of swallowing all these planets one by one, and finally becoming a dead star. That is the future of the sun. It has been evolving like this now; hereafter it will be involving like this. This kind of study is going on in modern astrophysics. Astronomers in ancient India understood *pralaya* or cosmic dissolution correctly. *Laya* means dissolution. When a human body dies it is dissolving—dissolving back into the chemical elements from which it

came. Everything goes back to its source; that is all; that is called *pralaya.* The whole world goes back like that to its source.

In a passage in the *Śānti Parva* of the *Mahābhārata* it is said, *adarśanāt āpatitaḥ, punaśca adarśanam gataḥ*, (you and I) 'have come from an unseen state, and (we will) return again to that unseen state'. In between we are in the seen state. The seen is something in between the two unseen. Past is unseen, future is unseen, the present is there for everyone to see; that is all we have. *Adarśanāt āpatitaḥ*, a baby appears from nowhere and *punaśca adarśanam gataḥ,* the old man also disappears; we don't know wherefrom it came or whereto it goes.

Let us live our lives in the light of this truth, that is what Vedanta says, and not in any make-belief world, not in some superstition. The truth is this: We have to live in this world, in this *vyakta* condition, for a short time. How will you live your life here? You can try to understand the whole truth about life and make the best of this life here. That is why these ideas also are part of our spiritual understanding. These are not mere cosmology to us. The presence of the sun is not mere cosmology to us. It nourishes every being every second. Everything in this life comes from the sun. So, it is not merely an objective cosmology. We are interpenetrated by the cosmos in which we live. That is why the concept of ecological unity is so strong in India in all our philosophy. We are only learning it today in modern Western experience, that the whole world is interrelated and interconnected. Some of the Western scientists have said the same thing: that any evil happening anywhere in the universe affects the whole universe. That is the interconnectedness or solidarity of things. That unity we are slowly coming to recognize by penetrating the *apparent* diversity on the surface of our experiences. So, here is a beautiful idea. The remaining verses of this chapter, about ten verses, are very beautiful. More of *bhakti* comes in at this stage.

In Vedanta, we imagine that background material saying to itself, *eko'ham bahusyām,* 'I am one; let me be many.' That Cosmic Mind which is called Brahmā here, is the first product of evolution. Just like when you put a seed in the soil, the seed is still undifferentiated within itself. The first differentiation comes when the sprout appears. From then on it is all

differentiation. That is Brahmā, the first sprout— *prathamajā*, 'the first born'; that is the language used to describe Brahmā. We use a little mythology to deal with profound scientific truths. Our astronomers knew that it is only a mythical language, but that it makes it easier to understand the subject. In today's cosmology also, a lot of mythical language is slowly entering. But once intelligence is recognized as an integral part of evolution, the whole language of modern Cosmology will change. It will be nearer to our language in Vedanta—*eko'ham bahusyām,* 'I am One, let me be many.'

The previous *śloka*, verse 17, refers to this length of lifetime of Brahmā. As I said earlier, the present Brahmā is now 51 years old. He has got another 49 years to go. Thereafter, another person will go there as the commander of the whole universe. So, our time scale and Brahmā's time scale are quite different. So, there is a popular story, a funny story, that a devotee performed severe *tapasyā,* and God, in the form of Brahmā, asked him: 'What can I do for you? What blessing do you want?' And the devotee said, 'Give me this; give me that.' And Brahmā said, 'Please wait a minute. I shall give you all you want.' And the devotee waited for days, months and years! 'What is this?', that devotee asked. Brahmā replied: '*My* minute I meant, not *your* minute!' This subject of time, therefore, is a subject of very serious study in modern science. Several books are written today on the theory of time. We have studied time; we have *also* studied timelessness, eternity.

So, here in the *Gītā,* you hear the word *avyakta* or undifferentiated. There is no time idea in the undifferentiated; there is no process; there is no movement; time has dissolved back to that unmanifested state. As soon as manifestation begins, you get this *vyakta* or manifested universe. So, there is this *avyakta* of the nature into which the whole universe is resolved at the time of dissolution. There is another *Avyakta*, the Supreme Brahman of the nature of Pure Consciousness, of which Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to tell us later on. That is always beyond time; that is eternity. That is the language we shall be hearing a verse or two later.

We have been studying verse 18 of this chapter. Very important ideas occur here; and very interesting also. *Avyaktādvyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ*

prabhavantyaharāgame. Ahaḥ means ‘morning’; *āgame*, ‘in the beginning’, i.e. in the beginning of the morning of Brahmā; *avyaktād*, ‘from the unmanifested; *vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ*, ’all the manifestations’; *prabhavanti,* ‘begin to appear’; cosmic evolution starts. *Rātryāgame pralīyante*, and ‘at the beginning of night, all these get dissolved’; *tatraiva avyakta samjñake*, ‘in that Reality known as *avyakta*’; into that *avyakta* the whole manifested world is dissolved at the beginning of the night of Brahmā. This is how day and night have been discussed here in terms of Brahmā, not in terms of you or I. In our own little time also, there is the waking time, and when night comes, we return into ourselves in deep sleep. Exactly the same experience. All these vast universes, all these powers, are gone as Brahmā goes into sleep.

So, this concept of *avyakta* plays a great part in our psychology, in our philosophy, and in our cosmology. Similar words are used in modern science also. The unmanifest is a beautiful idea; it *is* there but *not* manifest. That is the meaning of the unmanifest. In a banyan seed, the whole banyan tree is there, but you can’t detect it. With these senses, you cannot discover a banyan tree in the seed. It is extremely subtle, undifferentiated. But, when it grows into a mighty banyan tree, then you realize, ‘O! The banyan tree has become manifest now; it was unmanifest before.’ *Avyakta* before, now it has become *vyakta*. A baby has so many energies within, but as a baby very little of it is manifest. Extremely tender, very weak is the baby, but slowly that baby may grow into a Mohammed Ali, or any other powerful person in course of time. It was all there in the baby. Slowly, it is evolving or manifesting. This is the way we study the world, both in its microscopic aspect and in its macrocosmic aspect, in both ways. The small as well as the big. This division is very relevant. *Avyakta* and *vyakta prakṛti;* nature is called *avyakta* in our philosophy—non-differentiated nature. That very non-differentiated nature becomes differentiated nature.

The next *śloka* says:

भूतग्रामः स एवायं भूत्वा भूत्वा प्रलीयते ।
रात्र्यागमेऽवशः पार्थ प्रभवत्यहरागमे ॥१९॥

Bhūtagrāmaḥ sa evāyam bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate;

Rātryāgame'vaśaḥ pārtha prabhavati aharāgame — 8. 19

'The very same multitude of beings (that existed in the preceding day of Brahmā) merge, in spite of themselves, O son of Pṛthā, at the onset of night, and come out again at the onset of day.'

Here are two ideas. That is very revolting to many western people; though science compels them to accept it, they find it difficult.

One idea is that of *bhūtagrāmaḥ*, 'the entire world of cosmic entities and beings'; *sa evāyam*, 'these are the same;' these, *bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate*, 'get into existence and get dissolved back into primordial state'. When? *Rātryāgame*, 'at the onset of the night of Brahmā'. Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses the word *avaśaḥ;* that is a very difficult word meaning, 'without having any say in the matter'. It is all done by nature, our *avyakta*, without consulting us; that is called *avaśaḥ;* we are helpless in the matter. The sun is helpless in the matter of its dissolution or of projection. You and I are helpless in the matter. For example, your birth was not in your hands. 'Birth and death are in nobody's hands', Sri Ramakrishna used to say. We are thrown into the world. And then we are carried about here and there. Some will power is there; we are exerting it here and there. But in the larger sense, we cannot express our freedom at all, we are not free. Lot of things are happening from outside. The word *avaśaḥ* means 'helplessly'. People or beings come into the world helplessly, and go back out of this world helplessly. That is one idea which many Western people don't like. But the fact is that we are *avaśaḥ*. We can't make plans on these matters. Many things we can plan, but not everything. As Sri Ramakrishna said, 'we are like a cow tied with a thirty feet rope to a post. Within that 30 feet, the cow is absolutely free to move and graze or lie still. Beyond that, the cow is not free at all. The cowherd must come and shift it to another place.' So, freedom and necessity go together in our life. *Avaśaḥ* means that *some* freedom is there, but not much. Very limited it is.

The other idea, difficult for many Western minds, is: the same beings repeatedly manifest in every cosmic manifestation, in every creation. Many Western people say that this is the Hindu idea, repetitive; everything is the same as in the previous cycle. But they do not realize they are dealing with millions and millions of years of existence. Then you go back to primordial

state, and come back. Do you think it is the same thing? You are not there to understand it at all. There are two technical terms in Sanskrit: *vikāsa*, expansion, and *saṅkoca*, contraction; it is going on eternally. Where is the element of creativity then? Within this infinite expanse of existence, there are little areas of creativity which you and I can experience. Really, it is the same creative energy that repeats itself again and again, but it repeats for such a long time that you don't know that it is a repetition; it is going on; that is the language. 'Why should I be made to repeat my life again and again?' they ask this question in the West. You can't find an answer, unless you can prove that new things are coming every time. It is like playing cards; you shuffle them and distribute them to the players again and again. Where is the 'new' thing? Existence is a totality now; it is now in an undifferentiated state. It comes into a differentiated state through millions of years of evolution and then it goes back again—*sa evāyam bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate*, 'that same *bhūtagrāmaḥ* comes, plays its part and goes away'. What about something 'new'? All these look like new, but is the same. Everyday you can see that life is a repetition: getting up in the morning, washing, taking breakfast, going to work, then lunch, then this and that, and last going to sleep. The same repetition day after day; everyday we are repeating, and *that* doesn't trouble you. When it comes into a cosmic existence, you feel it is bad. But here it is said, *sa evāyam bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate*. This *bhūtagrāmaḥ* constantly comes into manifestation and, after millions and millions of years, the whole universe goes back to that *avyakta* state, *rātryāgame*, at the time of night of Brahmā, the period of withdrawal of all activities. Brahmā is all active during the day. So, creation goes on. He begins to withdraw himself into himself during night. The creation returns to him. That is called *rātryāgame pralīyate*. *Avaśaḥ*, we have no say in the matter, we are helpless! The whole universe is helpless! It comes and it goes. That is the meaning of the word *avaśaḥ*. *Prabhavati ahar āgame*, and early morning again the manifestation starts, evolution starts! This is the nature of the cosmos. There is a discussion in modern cosmology: when the second creation will take place, whether that second creation will be original? They want it to be original, but you may try your best. You can make it original in a limited sense only. Thus, variety is there; there is provision for creativity; but, overall there is

absolutely the same thing coming and going, the same *avyakta* getting *vyakta* and going back to *avyakta* state—*prabhavati ahar āgame*.

In verse 18, Śrī Kṛṣṇa had spoken of one *avyakta* into which the universe enters at the time of dissolution and from which it comes out. But, there is another *avyakta: avyakto'kṣara ityuktaḥ* (verse 20-21). That second *avyakta* is not of this nature. That is the pure Consciousness, namely, Brahman. That is a second category of *avyakta* which modern cosmology doesn't understand, doesn't accept or doesn't feel the need for. But, we in Vedanta speak of this *avyakta* which is Brahman, the Absolute, the eternal, not subject to time. Brahman and *Māyā. Avyakta, Māyā*, these are also common words. Due to *Māyā,* the *avyakta* becomes what you see here—the *vyakta* universe. The same *Māyā* takes it back also. These are all time-bound; but, there is another *avyakta*, beyond time, Eternity itself—*nityaḥ, sarvagataḥ, sthānuḥ, acalo'yam, sanātanaḥ*—as *Gītā* has said earlier (2. 24): 'Changeless, all-pervading, unmoving, immovable, this Self is eternal'.

So, in verse 20 Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

परस्तस्मात्तु भावोऽन्योऽव्यक्तोऽव्यक्तात्सनातनः ।
यः स सर्वेषु भूतेषु नश्यत्सु न विनश्यति ॥२०॥

Paraḥ tasmāttu bhāvaḥ anyaḥ avyaktaḥ avyaktāt sanātanaḥ;
Yaḥ sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu na vinaśyati — 8. 20

'But beyond this *avyakta* or unmanifested, there is that other *avyakta,* the Unmanifested, Eternal Existence—that which is not destroyed at the destruction of all beings.'

This verse gives a great truth which modern astrophysics is ignorant of. *Paraḥ tasmāt tu bhāvaḥ anyaḥ avyaktaḥ avyaktāt sanātanaḥ*, 'there is another *avyakta* superior to this *avyakta';* that *avyakta* is *sanātanaḥ*, 'eternal'; *paraḥ*, 'supreme'. *Yaḥ sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu na vinaśyati*, 'which doesn't get destroyed when all these beings in the world become destroyed in that dissolution state'. These things have destruction, they come and they go, but this supreme pure spiritual Principle, which is called Brahman, remains ever the same. All modifications come only through nature, which is the power of Brahman, *Śakti* of Brahman; we call It *Śiva*

and *Śakti*, Brahman and *Śakti*, Brahman and *Māyā*. Through *Māyā,* you find all these manifestations coming and going, etc., but behind this is the supreme Brahman, of the nature of Pure Consciousness, which, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *saḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu*, 'when all the beings are dissolved', *na vinaśyati,* 'It is not destroyed'. There is the supreme spiritual Principle which is ever-pure, ever-free, ever-eternal. This is very difficult for modern scientists to accept. It will take a good deal of time for scientists to understand the nature of Consciousness—probably, in another few decades of scientific development, they will be able to understand the One behind the many, the One, ever the same, eternal, though It appears here as the many. This knowledge is slowly gaining acceptance by some scientists. It will take time, but this is what Vedanta has said. Behind the world of change is the world of the changeless, eternal, Brahman. That is why there is God in the universe. A changing God is not God at all. That is why even Brahmā is not treated as a God in that sense. Nobody worships Brahmā in the whole of India. We have only one Brahmā temple in Ajmer in Rajasthan. I don't think anybody will worship Brahmā as the one deity who wrote your fate on your forehead. Here, you can see the idea of the timeless behind time. This is the eternal nature of God. A God who dies is not a God at all. But, in the West, God was presented through mere dogma, not through rational investigation or from the depth of experience—an extra-cosmic God, outside the universe, by whose order the universe goes on. That kind of extra-cosmic God was presented in the West against which the Western thought revolted, until you came to the nineteenth century. There was a German philosopher, Nietzsche, who spoke of a superman, a superman appearing in the world with violence 'of deed and demeanour', exactly as Hitler who came later on. That is the story of the superman in Nietzsche. It was Nietzsche, therefore, who said, 'God is dead'. Why did God die? He wept and wept because he could not do anything for the world. He wanted to do but he had no power to do anything. Therefore, he wept and died. So, God is dead; that is the theory that started from that time. So, many Western writers speak of God as dead. The *Time Magazine* wrote ten pages on, 'Is God dead?' In 1968, when I was passing through South and North America, in several places, they took this subject of 'God is dead' for my lectures. I gave the Hindu view. Yes, that extra-cosmic god is dead. But the eternal Self of all is ever there. It is like the saying: king is dead, but

long live the King! It is beyond life and death, beyond yes and no. That is the nature of the supreme Reality, the witness of everything. If there is a death, he witnesses it. The Self can never die; It is eternal. That is how we developed this truth of the eternal Divine behind the changing universe.

And in my correspondence with Sir Julian Huxley, given in the appendix of my book *The Message of the Upaniṣads*, this subject has been discussed. He had written in his book that God is increasingly becoming 'the fading smile of a cosmic Cheshire cat'. The smile still continues even after the cat is dead. That is the place of God today in the Western scientific thought. So, I wrote there, 'That might be true of an extra-cosmic God believed in by the Western people, but India's God is quite different.' There I quoted Śaṅkarācārya's *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi,* verse 572, in that letter:

Astīti pratyayo yaśca yaśca nāstīti vastuni;
Buddhereva guṇāvetau na tu nityasya vastunaḥ —

'The affirmation (of the theist) that the *vastu* or God is, the negation (of the atheist) that God is not, both these are nothing but pulsations of the human mind; it never touches the eternal Reality (behind the mind).' That is the nature of God presented in Indian cosmology, which is referred to here.

So, verse 20 says: *Parastasmāttu bhāvo'nyo'vyakto'vyaktātsanātanaḥ,* 'other than this *avyakta,* there is a *paraḥ sanātanaḥ avyakta*.' That is Brahman. *Yaḥ sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu*, 'which when the whole universe of beings gets destroyed'; *na vinaśyati*, 'It doesn't die'; It is always there. There we discovered the Reality of God, the eternal Self of the universe, eternal Self within men and women. The Atman and Brahman are one and the same. The same Brahman is in you, in me, as the eternal Self. Many scientific writers today refer appreciatively to this concept of India. I met two or three scientists who believe that the Atman is one with Brahman. The Atman, of the nature of Pure Consciousness in you and I, is one with Brahman which is the Pure Consciousness behind this universe. These are one and the same. This is a profound truth and it is admitted today by more than one scientist in their newly published books.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling, *na vinaśyati*, 'that *sanātanaḥ*, eternal Reality, doesn't get destroyed'. 'The One remains, the many change and pass', is the

famous passage in *Adonais* by Percy Bysshe Shelley, the British poet:

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.

That is a famous line by Shelley, very much influenced by Vedanta. Browning and Shelley are two British poets greatly influenced by Vedantic ideas.

The next verse says:

अव्यक्तोऽक्षर इत्युक्तस्तमाहुः परमां गतिम् ।
यं प्राप्य न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम ॥२१॥

Avyaktaḥ akṣara ityuktaḥ tamāhuḥ paramām gatim;
Yam prāpya na nivartante taddhāma paramam mama—8. 21

'What has been called Unmanifested and Imperishable, has been described as the Goal Supreme. That is My highest state, having attained which, there is no return.'

Avyaktaḥ akṣara ityuktaḥ, 'this *Avyakta* about which verse 20 said, "It is *sanātanaḥ"*, that is, it remains when all the other entities are destroyed; it is *akṣara*, imperishable.' *Kṣara* means perishable, capable of getting destroyed. This is *akṣara*, 'imperishable'. *Tam āhuḥ paramām gatim*, 'that is considered to be the supreme Goal (of everyone)'. To realize Brahman beyond the *Prakṛti*, beyond *Māyā,* is the goal of *human* life. Ever-pure, ever-free and immortal, is the nature of that Reality.

So, we have in this *śloka* the wonderful idea: 'Reaching which there is no return'. Earlier we had come across that word *avaśaḥ,* 'helpless' in verse 19. That helplessness will disappear when you realize this great truth, the supreme Reality or Brahman. This *Avyakta* is *sanātanaḥ. Tam āhuḥ paramām gatim*, 'that is called the supreme *gati* or Goal'; *yam prāpya na nivartante*, 'by reaching which one does not return' to the cycle of birth and death. *Taddhāma paramam mama*, 'that is My supreme *dhāma*, i.e. Abode'.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is saying thus, identifying Himself with the supreme Divine Reality: that is My supreme Abode.

पुरुषः स परः पार्थ भक्त्या लभ्यस्त्वनन्यया ।
यस्यान्तःस्थानि भूतानि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ॥२२॥

Puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ pārtha bhaktyā labhyaḥ tvananyayā;
Yasyāntaḥsthāni bhūtāni yena sarvamidam tatam — 8. 22

'And that supreme *Puruṣa* is attainable, O son of Pṛthā, by whole-souled devotion to Him alone, in Whom all beings dwell, and by Whom all this is pervaded.'

This truth is called *Puruṣa*, the supreme Person, Impersonal-Personal God, the God of Vedanta. In one sense it is Impersonal; in another sense it is Personal. As Personal, it manifests as this universe, guides this universe, and does everything. And behind It is the impersonal Absolute, transcendental state of the *Puruṣa*. So, *Puruṣa sa paraḥ pārtha*, 'this *Puruṣa* is the supreme, O Arjuna'. This will be summed up in high language in chapter 15. The word *puruṣottama,* Supreme *Puruṣa,* will come there also.

How to achieve union with Him? *Bhaktyā labhyaḥ tu ananyayā*, 'only through *bhakti* can one reach Him'. What kind of *bhakti*? *Ananyā bhakti*, 'which is one-pointed devotion'. Mind doesn't go to anything else. That kind of devotion. *Ananyā bhakti, ekānta bhakti*, these are various terms and mean one-pointed devotion. Through that devotion alone can one realize this supreme *Puruṣa. Parā* means supreme; beyond all nature is the supreme *Puruṣa*. This comes in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* also. You have various categories of existence beyond which comes the highest. Beyond *Prakṛti* or nature, beyond *avyakta* or the unmanifested, is *Puruṣa*, and that *Puruṣa* is says the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (I. iii. 11): *sā kāṣṭhā, sā parā gatiḥ,* 'that is the *kāṣṭhā*, that is the highest'; *sā parā gatiḥ*, 'that is the supreme state'. We are studying gross things; then we go to subtle, and still subtler. The subtler the thing, the more universal it is. In that kind of study, we come out of this world of name and form, out of this outside world which is gross, and go through various stages like *manas*, *buddhi*, etc. Ultimately, we come to

Puruṣa which is supremely subtle, supremely universal. *That is the consummation of subtlety, immensity, and inwardness*. Everything becomes universal there. So, that is the language of the Upaniṣads: *sā kāṣṭhā, sā parā gatiḥ*. That *Puruṣa* can be attained through pure *bhakti*, unmotivated *bhakti*. That is the meaning of *ananya bhakti*. 'I don't want anything else except love'. And this idea of *bhakti* has been illustrated in the *Purāṇas*, in the lives of various saints; and the most glorious story is that of Prahlāda; that five year old boy whose *bhakti* was absolutely pure and unmotivated. His story comes in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. He got the realization of the Divine and when Narasimha, that man-lion incarnation of God, pleased with this boy's devotion, said, 'Prahlāda, I am very pleased with you. Ask a boon of me, whatever you like,' Prahlada smiled and said, 'I am not a business man to ask a boon. I love you, that is all. I don't want anything in return.' That is why Prahlāda is praised in all our literature as the highest example of a *bhakta.* And *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras* will say, *bhaktā ekāntino mukhyāḥ,* 'devotees who are *ekāntis* (one-pointed) are the best among devotees'. One-pointed devotion can't be shaken by this or that.

In the same *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, seventh book, where you get this story of Prahlāda, you also get the story of Dhruva in the fourth book. A wonderful boy, a wonderful life also. But when he actually realized the Divine, he wanted to get a high position and God blessed him. With that he became *Dhruva nakṣatra*, the Pole Star. After his passing away he became the Pole Star. God had said to him, 'I shall give you that high state where even the *saptarṣis* will be with you all the time. You will be in the centre, constantly at the same place. That will be the highest place. I shall give that place to you.' He was satisfied. And God disappeared. After some time he began to think, 'What a fool I was. Coming to this great Divine, I asked for a little status. I am a fool.' He became very much regretful afterwards. This is the story of Dhruva in the fourth book and further comes in the seventh book the story of Prahlāda. There he was absolutely free. 'I do not want to ask anything. I am not a trader, I am not a business man.' I give you this; you give this in return. That's called business; exchange. Here there is no exchange. It is one-pointed devotion. 'Love for love's sake', as Swami Vivekananda said. This idea is highly commended in much of our spiritual literature. It is a very high state, but it is good to *know* that it is a high state.

Otherwise, we will bring everything down to our own present state as some of the devotees do in India. He goes to one god, say Gaṇeśa. If he or she doesn't get what was prayed for, he or she goes to Kārtikeya , then to Śiva, then to another. He or she *must* get what was sought. God must be a servant and give him or her this and that. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan said, 'We don't love God, we use God.' That is not the type of *bhakti* in Prahlāda. Pure love is there. *Love for love's sake.* Vedanta calls it *ahaitukī bhakti.* Hari, Viṣṇu, or Śiva are various names of one Divine Person who is of such a nature that He draws the hearts of men like the young sage Śuka, who had already realized his own nature as the infinite Self. They have no cravings at all. Even then they worship Hari because God has this quality of drawing even their hearts. Here is a great verse in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (I. vii. 10). Men like Śuka and Prahlāda love God. What must be the greatness of that Divine Reality that even these people, who don't seek anything, love Him?

Átmārāmāśca munayaḥ
nirgranthā api urukrame;
Kurvanti ahaitukīm bhaktim
itham bhūtagaṇo hariḥ —

'They take delight in the infinite Self, Hari'; *nirgranthā*, 'they have no bondages at all'; 'yet they constantly practise this kind of *ahaitukīm bhakti,* motiveless devotion. That is the nature of Hari'. So great is Hari, that He draws to Himself the hearts, not of ordinary people, but of extraordinary people like Śuka and Prahlāda.

That subject is coming up in the *Gītā* from now onwards. As I said, more and more of this wonderful teaching of *bhakti* will find expression in the later verses of the *Gītā*.

Yasyāntaḥsthāni bhūtāni, 'that *Puruṣa*, Supreme Person, in whom is this whole universe'. See the mythology. Today you can understand this mythology better. There are certain Western writers who have tried to interpret the myths and legends of the Hindu religion. Prof. Zimmer of France, a famous scholar who passed away some years ago, in his famous book, *The Myths and Symbols of the Hindu Religion,* beautifully brings out the truths behind some of these Hindu myths and symbols. For example, take the case of Viṣṇu: He lies on the serpent called *śeṣa;* see the name of

the serpent. *Śeṣa* means ‘what remains’; after all the universe dissolves what remains is *śeṣa*. On that, this infinite Consciousness is resting, absolutely calm and quiet, in a little *yoganidra*, ‘*yoga*-sleep’. When the time for creation comes, a lotus comes out of His navel. On the lotus appears Brahmā. That is the story in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. And Brahmā wonders, ‘what am I to do?’ He looks around, and finds nothing there. He goes through the lotus’ stalk into Viṣṇu Himself. Then he understands. ‘Yes, I must have some work to do, the Lord is omniscient.’ Then he comes out and hears a sound, ‘*tapa, tapa’*. ‘Do *tapas*, do *tapas’*. Not physical *tapas* but *jñānamayam tapaḥ,* ‘knowledge *tapas’*. Through that *tapas* he understood the entire world of knowledge—every law, every theory, everything connected with the universe to come—he knew it all. So, he is called *Vedamaya* or *Vedamūrti*, the embodiment of Veda. Veda means knowledge inclusive of the science of physical nature and the science of human possibilities which is the science of spirituality. Thorough knowledge is called Veda. When Brahmā heard this word ‘*tapa, tapa’,* he got this profound message, and he engaged himself in *tapas*. What kind of *tapas*? Intense concentration to understand ‘what is this work in front of me’. After that *tapas,* the universe came out.

The creative act of any creation is preceded by *tapas.* Without *tapas* there is no creativity. An artist is in *tapas;* then he or she gets creativity. Behind every creative action there is this *tapas*. That *tapas* Brahmā did, an ‘exploding’ *tapas*.

Now, in that story, we also read about the withdrawal of the whole universe and its also being taken back into Viṣṇu at the end of creation. There it remains dormant for thousands of millions of years. Then again occurs another act of creation. Viṣṇu opens the eyes and then creation begins. Viṣṇu closing the eyes, that is called dissolution. What must be the cosmic dimension of that Person? When we speak about it as a story, we think it is only children’s story. But, when we study the subject in depth, we see it as a profound truth through a mythological language, anthropomorphic language. That is what our Zimmer has written about—several aspects of our Indian myths. Some of our myths are simply myths. But some myths expressed great truths. Take the myth of Śiva’s bull, Nandi. Why does Śiva go on a bull? Bull stands for that energy, the pride of

physical strength, mental strength, the strength of the ego, and Śiva controls it. It is perfectly under Śiva's control. The myth of Śiva's dance as the Naṭarāja, depicted in Tamil Nadu at Chidambaram temple, was used by scientist Capra in his *Tao of Physics* as illustrative of nuclear forces. That is what many Western scholars are doing today—investigating the philosophy and spirituality of the myths of the world. *Parabola* is coming here for some months; it contains a very rich description of Mexican and other myths of the world. Our myths also used to come in it. So, I am telling that you can put the same scientific truth through a myth. But very often some of the Western writers criticise our myths saying, 'this is the Hindu's belief that the earth is held by some elephants'. They take up only the children's stories and declare that this is all what the Hindus know. But today many are understanding the Hindu myths better. They are going to the truth behind all these stories. The land of India is famous for its creation of myths, creation of stories. In fact, children all over the world are indebted to India for the best of animal stories. The story of *Gajendramokṣa*, which I had referred to earlier, is so popular all over India. I was very happy to find it beautifully sculptured in Indonesia, in Cambodia, and in many other places. It is beautifully depicted in art, because it had appealed to the human mind outside India also.

The remaining verses will take up the subject again. Certain religious practices and beliefs tormented our minds at certain times. When new values came in, those things were quietly set aside, and new ideas came forth. That idea will come in the next few verses in this very chapter. There is such a thing as evolution of religious ideas. Spirituality is one, but the ways of expressing it can be different. Consider *śrāddha* or obsequies for the departed. We have a particular way of doing *śrāddha*. Today, many people don't like *that* particular ritual of doing *śrāddha.* They say, 'let us feed poor people in some orphanage; it is much better for the soul of my father than anything else.' Beautiful, you can change your method. You have the right to change. Nothing is stagnant, nothing is stationary, except the one infinite Reality. Everything else will change. That is the Hindu wisdom in respect of religion and religious practices; and, because we change, we are still alive. If we had been rigid, we would have died long ago. That is how our religion, as early as the *Ṛg-Veda,* declared this Truth:

ekam sat, viprā bahudhā vadanti, 'Truth is One; sages call it in various names', which we hold on to even today. Essentially the spirit is the same, the expression alone is different. That is what makes a tremendous renewal in India age after age.

The remaining verses of this chapter deal with, what you call in Philosophy, eschatology or what happens to the soul after death. Many religions have many beliefs on this subject. So, here you have a statement of eschatology which obtained in the Vedic period. That is referred to by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in this chapter in the course of dealing with the main theme of the chapter.

After death people go to higher spheres; and in the Upaniṣads, specially the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, there is a reference to a twofold path: *devayāna,* 'the path of the gods', and *pitṛyāna,* 'the path of the ancestral spirits'. These are also called the Northern Path and the Southern Path corresponding to the sun's movement to the Northern hemisphere and to the Southern hemisphere. Even in the *Ṛg-Veda* there is mention of these two paths—*pitṛyāna* and *devayāna*. But a detailed description of the passage of the soul after death to that final state through stages along each of the paths, is not there in the *Ṛg-Veda*. Tilak in his *Gītā Rahasya* and in his earlier book, *Arctic Home of the Vedas,* studied the subject from the point of view of the climate and the situation. If our ancient home was somewhere in the polar area then we must have had the experience of six months of darkness and six months of light. Even today when you go to Sweden, Norway, far North, or the Arctic Circle, you will find this experience. Day continues for six months, night also continues for six months. Hardly for a few hours you will get a little sunlight in the winter season. Similarly, you will get very little darkness in summer. In fact, when I went to a little town Kiruna in Northern Sweden in 1961 during my lecture tour of seventeen European countries, it was 12 o'clock at night, and I was sitting in a car reading a book without any lamp. The sun is there, just below the horizon! It goes from this side of the horizon to the other side of the horizon. That is all its movement; that is the experience in the North Pole. In the opposite side, there is the South Pole. But when it became winter, there was long hours of darkness. Even in Holland, at ten o'clock in the night, it was just like 6 pm. here. Even at night at ten o'clock, I could sit in a park and take my dinner,

because sun's light was still lingering. So, that is the nature of that experience. And when you come to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad,* these two paths become paths for the souls to take after death. That is what is being discussed in the next four verses.

यत्र काले त्वनावृत्तिमावृत्तिं चैव योगिनः ।
प्रयाता यान्ति तं कालं वक्ष्यामि भरतर्षभ ॥२३॥

Yatra kāle tvanāvṛttim āvṛttim caiva yoginaḥ;
Prayātā yānti tam kālam vakṣyāmi bharatarṣabha — 8. 23

'Now I shall tell you, O great among the Bharatas, of the time (path) travelling in which, the *Yogis* do not return, (and again of that, taking which) they do return.'

First is the Northern Path which is mentioned here:

अग्निर्ज्योतिरहः शुक्लः षण्मासा उत्तरायणम् ।
तत्र प्रयाता गच्छन्ति ब्रह्म ब्रह्मविदो जनाः ॥२४॥

Agniḥ jyotiḥ ahaḥ śuklaḥ ṣaṇmāsā uttarāyaṇam;
Tatra prayātā gacchanti brahma brahmavido janāḥ — 8. 24

'Fire, flame, daytime, the bright fortnight, six months of the Northern passage of the sun—taking this path, the knowers of Brahman go to Brahman.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'Fire, flame, daytime, the bright fortnight, the six months of the northern passage of the sun—*uttarāyaṇam*, i.e. the northern passage*;* taking this path the knowers of Brahman go to Brahman'. This idea comes in our later theologies as the *krama-mukti*, 'slow and gradual emancipation'. You get a little high, stay for some time, climb still higher, still higher, without returning to the world of birth and death. You go to achieve realization of Brahman through *krama-mukti*, i.e. gradual liberation; that is one path. This is called *uttarāyaṇam* path. Then the second path is *dakṣiṇāyanam*. How?

धूमो रात्रिस्तथा कृष्णः षण्मासा दक्षिणायनम् ।
तत्र चान्द्रमसं ज्योतिर्योगी प्राप्य निवर्तते ॥२५॥

Dhūmo rātriḥ tathā kṛṣṇaḥ ṣaṇmāsā dakṣiṇāyanam;
Tatra cāndramasam jyotiryogī prāpya nivartate — 8. 25

'Smoke, night-time, the dark fortnight, the six months of the southern passage of the sun—taking this path the *Yogī*, attaining the lunar light, returns.'

The second path is through the south. Fire has both smoke and fire. Therefore, smoke also is a part of fire. So, that was the fire path mentioned earlier; this is the smoke path. Smoke, night-time, dark fortnight, six months of the southern movement of the sun—*dakṣiṇāyanam;* taking this path, the *yogī,* attaining the lunar light, returns. These are two paths mentioned in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* also, in much greater detail.

When Vivekananda dealt with this subject in a lecture abroad, he made this observation: 'I don't know what all these mean. Everybody says something or the other; since it is there, I am presenting it to you. I can't make head or tail of it!' Everything that is there is not to be taken in. Beliefs have changed in the course of time. Just like in scientific thought: when you know some aspects of nature, you follow some particular method, when you know more of that nature and probe to a deeper level, our approach changes. In philosophy it is just the same. So, when the Upaniṣads came, they retained some of the old ideas, but they had something more important to give to humanity. That is rational. That you can discuss, that you can experience also. These other things cannot be experienced. Nobody can say, 'let me die, go by that path and come back and tell what happened'. You can't do that. So, this is not meant for verification. But, in the Upaniṣads, the profound truths are those that are meant to be verified in life, verifiable and verified. You can check them up. Try to find out whether it is false. You are free to falsify it, according to one of the writers on the methods of science. You can say that, in this method of the real teaching of the Vedanta, you can verify it, you can falsify it if you can, but it is a challenge to everyone. It is *vastu tantra-jñāna,* 'knowledge of Truth as it is', says Śaṅkarācārya in the beginning of his *Brahma-Sūtra* commentary. That is the

main teaching of the Upaniṣads. Many philosophical and spiritual truths you get there, but it contains also old un-testable beliefs and this is one such. Even something about sacrifices you will find in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. But that is only in the beginning. When the Upaniṣad proceeds, its own truths begin to come out. That is pure spirituality; the infinite nature of men and women; our oneness with all. You can realize this truth, not in a future life, not in a heaven far away, but *here and now*. The words *iha eva,* 'here itself', come again and again. If the truth is hidden in you, there is no need for you to go about to the sky to get realization; you can do it here, you can do it as a labourer, as a housewife, as anybody else. That teaching came later on in the Upaniṣads and subsequent literature as Vedanta with its two great spiritual paths, namely, *jñāna* and *bhakti*.

When these two paths of *jñāna* and *bhakti* were formulated, these Northern and Southern paths lost their attraction and relevance, and millions of our people began to follow these spiritual paths. In the *Mahabhārata,* you read about Bhīṣma waiting for the northern journey of the sun to discard his body. Lying on a bed of arrows without minding the difficulty he said, 'I shall pass away when the sun starts the northern journey, *uttarāyaṇa,*' and then he gave up his body at that time. *Mahabhārata* describes it very vividly. After that we don't hear of the paths of *uttarāyaṇa* and *dakṣiṇāyana*. As astronomical phenomena they are there, but as eschatological phenomena very few people hear of it or believe in it now. Through *bhakti* and through *jñāna,* we brought religion closer to people. All these un-understandable mysteries were quietly eliminated. Eschatology took a new form. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is referring to this because it is there in our Upaniṣads. But He Himself says at the end, that this is not the highest. The last *śloka* of the chapter will tell us that after referring to this old eschatology in the last but one verse:

शुक्लकृष्णे गती ह्येते जगतः शाश्वते मते ।
एकया यात्यनावृत्तिमन्ययावर्तते पुनः ॥२६॥

Śuklakṛṣṇe gatī hyete jagataḥ śāśvate mate;
Ekayā yātyanāvṛttim anyayāvartate punaḥ — 8. 26

‘Truly are these bright and dark paths of the world considered eternal: one leads to non-return; by the other, one returns.’

Śuklakṛṣṇe gatī hyete jagataḥ śāśvate mate, ‘these two paths —*śukla* and *kṛṣṇa*, white and dark—they are eternal paths for people to take after death’. *Ekayā yātyanāvṛttim*, ‘by one path when you go, you don’t return to this world again’; slowly, slowly you achieve Brahman. *Anyayā āvartate punaḥ*, ‘in the other path, you go, but come back again to this world’ after enjoying the fruits of your good actions in some heaven. That is the characteristic of *pitṛyāna* or *dakṣiṇāyana.* Here there is a return journey. The other one is *devayāna,* which has no return journey. Now, having spoken about these two paths, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving in verse 27, a very interesting and inspiring spiritual truth which will constitute an introduction to the 9th chapter, where it will be stated that, through *bhakti* you have spiritual experience *here itself.* There is no going about here and there. That language will come later. Here it is just introduced:

नैते सृती पार्थ जानन्योगी मुह्यति कश्चन ।
तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु योगयुक्तो भवार्जुन ॥२७॥

Naite sṛtī pārtha jānan yogī muhyati kaścana;
Tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu yogayukto bhavārjuna — 8. 27

‘No *yogī*, O son of Pṛthā, is deluded after knowing these paths. Therefore, O Arjuna, be you steadfast in *yoga*, at all times.’

The *yogī* is expounded by the *Gītā* in this verse. The word *yogī* is applied to anybody and everybody who has lived the spiritual life even a little. But, the *Gītā* has given in the second chapter, two wonderful expositions of *yoga—yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam,* ‘*yoga* is efficiency in action’ (2. 50); and *samatvam yoga ucyate,* ‘equanimity is called *yoga*’ (2. 48). Many other such definitions will come later on. The *Gītā yogī* is quite different. How?

Naite sṛtī pārtha jānan, ‘O Arjuna, knowing the nature of these two paths’, the *yogī* of the *Gītā*, *na muhyati kaścana*, ‘is not deluded at all’. By this path you go slowly and you reach the goal. By the other path you go and return—the *Gītā yogī* is not deluded by either of them. *Tasmāt*

'therefore', *sarveṣu kāleṣu yoga yukto bhavārjuna*, 'Arjuna, be a *yogī* at all times'. That is the *central theme of the Gīta.* That through work, through human relations, realizing the truth in the heart of all, you realize the truth *here* itself. You take the Name of the Divine and at the time of death, you achieve the highest human experience thereby. None of these eschatological paths are necessarily there. So, that is the greatness of the next chapter, the 9th chapter, which is very famous. And as we enter it, we shall see that the language used also indicates its special nature.

So, *tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu*, 'therefore, at all times', don't be deluded by all these paths; and *yogī bhava arjuna,* 'be a *yogī,* O Arjuna', live a spiritual life. God is not far away, He is nearer than the nearest. Islam's *Koran* says, 'He is nearer than the vein in your neck.' That is a wonderful idea; it is not going about here and there. That is not the way of religion. Realize Him here and now—*iha eva*, *iha eva*—as Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say later on. We have already heard it in verse 19 of the 5th chapter. Now He says in the last verse of this chapter:

वेदेषु यज्ञेषु तपःसु चैव
दानेषु यत्पुण्यफलं प्रदिष्टम् ।
अत्येति तत्सर्वमिदं विदित्वा
योगी परं स्थानमुपैति चाद्यम् ॥२८॥

Vedeṣu yajñeṣu tapaḥsu caiva
dāneṣu yat puṇyaphalam pradiṣṭam;
Atyeti tatsarvamidam viditvā
yogī param sthānam upaiti cādyam — 8. 28

'Whatever meritorious effect is declared (in the scriptures) to accrue from (the study of) the Vedas, (the performance of) *Yajñas*, (the practice of) austerities and gifts—above all these rises the *yogī*, having known this, and attains to the primeval, supreme Abode (*here and now*).'

This is the last verse of the 8th chapter. Whatever meritorious effect is described in the scriptures to accrue from the study of the Vedas, performance of the *yajñas*, practice of austerities or *tapas*, knowing all these, the *yogī* rises above all of them; see the language. That is the *yogī* of

the *Gītā*. The *yogī* rises above all of them, having known them, and attains to the Primordial Supreme Absolute, *here and now*—that is written in brackets; it is not there in the text; that will come in the next chapter. This verse is like an introduction to the next chapter.

The *yogī, atyeti tat*, 'transcends all of them'; *sarvam idam viditvā*, 'after knowing all these paths'—that this path goes this way, that path goes that way, knowing this—he or she has no more delusion and has realized this truth. *Yogī param sthānam upaiti*, 'the *yogī* achieves the highest Primordial state' here itself. This is what came later on as the truth of *jivanmukti*, 'freedom while alive'. A *jivanmukta* has no bondage at all—he or she is liberated *here and now.*

So, this kind of going about here and there is not necessary. Everything is here. And Sri Ramakrishna tells us in our time, '"there, there" is ignorance, "here, here" is knowledge'. Whenever you think something is 'there', that is *ajñāna* or ignorance only. Everything is 'here, here'—*ekhāne, ekhāne jñān, śekhāne, śekhāne ajñān*. In Bengali *śekhāne* means 'there', *ekhane* means 'here'. That is what he said. So, that wonderful truth is the highest spiritual discovery in the Upaniṣads; and from that time through *bhakti*, *jñāna*, *karma* and *dhyāna*, we try to achieve the Divine here itself. If you fail, you will have a reincarnation to work it out. That truth came later on. This is how the *yogī param sthānam upaiti cādyam; ādyam* means 'the Primordial state'. How this universe was, what it was in the beginning? Brahman. That state we reach. After all these evolutionary steps, we realize through the human body itself that supreme truth, says this verse.

इति अक्षरब्रह्मयोगो नाम अष्टमोऽध्यायः ।

Iti akṣarabrahma-yogo nāma aṣṭamo'dhyāyaḥ —

'Thus ends the eighth chapter, designated *The Way to the Imperishable Brahman.'*

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 9

Rājavidyā-Rājaguhya-Yoga
The Way of the Kingly Knowledge and the Kingly Secret

Now, we enter the ninth chapter. Its name is *Rājavidyā-rājaguhya-Yoga* chapter. It is described in the second line of the opening verse as a combination of *jñāna* and *vijñāna*, knowledge and direct experience. The first two verses refer to the chapter in a wonderful language. *Bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues his exposition without any need for Arjuna to ask a question.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said:'

इदं तु ते गुह्यतमं प्रवक्ष्याम्यनसूयवे ।
ज्ञानं विज्ञानसहितं यज्ज्ञात्वा मोक्ष्यसेऽशुभात ॥१॥

Idam tu te guhyatamam pravakṣyāmyanasūyave;
Jñānam vijñānasahitam yajjñātvā mokṣyase'śubhāt — 9. 1

'To you, who are not of a carping mind, verily, I shall now declare this, the most profound knowledge along with experience or realization, knowing which, you shall be free from whatever is evil, i.e. worldliness.'

This is very simple, straightforward Sanskrit. *Idam tu te guhyatamam pravakṣyāmi,* 'Here, now, I am going to tell you the profoundest truth'. Because you are *anasūyave*, 'you have no *asūya,* you are free from jealousy'. Your mind is free. Spiritual truths cannot enter into the heart of the people and stay there if it is full of *asūya,* jealousy, meanness, pettiness. That must go. In hundreds of places, in our spiritual literature, this has always been emphasized: Don't communicate this truth to one who is full of *asūya,* because that is a very low mind. No great truth can be understood by

such people. So, *anasūyave,* 'one who is free from jealousy'. Also, in the end of the *Gītā*, in the eighteenth chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say this: 'don't teach this to one who is full of *asūya,* because they won't understand it at all.' It is sowing wild oats without any harvest coming out of it. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna, 'you are free from *asūya;* therefore, I am going to communicate to you this profoundest truth.' *Guhyam* and *guhyatamam* means, 'profound and profoundest'. *'Tamam'* in Sanskrit indicates superlative degree; '*taram*' indicates comparative degree. So, *guhyam, guhyataram* and *guhyatamam. Pravakṣyāmi,* 'I am going to tell you.' What is its speciality? *Jñānam vijñānasahitam,* 'it contains *jñāna* along with *vijñāna*, "knowledge and experience".' Suppose you say, 'take a glass of milk and make a good study of milk'; that is *jñāna.* You know all about milk. But, you drink it, get nourished by it, that is *vijñāna*, something more important than merely knowing the nature of milk. So, spiritual knowledge combined with spiritual experience, spiritual realization; the first must rise to the second stage. British thinker, the late Bertrand Russell says in his book, *Impact of Science on Society:* 'Unless we increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow.' Both are needed: *jñānam vijñānasahitam. Yajjñātvā mokṣyase aśubhāt,* 'by knowing which you will be freed from all that is evil'. *Śubha* is good, *aśubha* is evil. You will be free from all evil. That is the promise in the first verse. And the second one expounds it and makes it still more explicit:

राजविद्या राजगुह्यं पवित्रमिदमुत्तमम् ।
प्रत्यक्षावगमं धर्म्यं सुसुखं कर्तुमव्ययम् ॥२॥

Rāja vidyā rāja guhyam pavitram idam uttamam;
Pratyakṣāvagamam dharmyam susukham kartum avyayam — 9. 2

'Of sciences, the highest; of profundities, the deepest; of purifiers, the supreme, is this; it is realizable by direct perception, endowed with ethical and moral values, very easy to perform, and is of an imperishable nature.'

Every word is full of deep meaning. The first word is *Rāja vidyā,* 'among *vidyās,* this is the royal *vidyā*'. *Vidyā* means 'science', knowledge. In fact, the word science also means knowledge. There is no mystery about it. Science means verified and verifiable knowledge. So, here *vidyā* means

science. *Rāja vidyā*, among all the *vidyās,* this is the *rāja vidyā.* Chemistry, physics, astronomy, and many other *vidyās* are there. Among all these, this is *rājavidyā. Rāja guhyam,* 'the royal profundity'. *Guhyam* means 'profound, mysterious, or secret'. But, in the spiritual context, it means 'profound, deep'. *Guha* means a cave. Something is in a cave which you search, and with difficulty you find what you are seeking. All scientific truths lie hidden; one has to seek and discover them. You can't see with your eyes nor touch with your hands. In that sense the word *guhyam* means 'extremely profound'. You have to dive deep to get it. Just like the pearls which lie deep in the ocean; you have to dive and then get the pearl. This is like that. So, *rājavidyā, rājaguhyam.* Then, *pavitram idam uttamam,* 'supremely purifying is this (royal science)'.

Then comes a wonderful word: *pratyakṣāvagamam,* 'you can realize it in your own day-to-day experience'. *Pratyakṣa* means 'before the eyes'. Direct perception is called *pratyakṣa. Pratyakṣāvagamam* means, you can realize this truth even as you realize a *pratyakṣa vastu* in your experience. See the language: *pratyakṣāvagamam;* no going about millions and millions of light years into space to find out some particular heaven there. Here it is; open your inner eyes and see it. That is the language. In everyday life, during everyday activity, you can realize this truth. That is the meaning of *pratyakṣa.* You need not have a separate life to realize the truth. As a housewife, as a labourer, as a worker, as a politician, in every state of life you can realize the truth which is present in every one. That is the meaning of *pratyakṣāvagamam.* Not *śekhāne, śekhāne,* 'there, there', but *ekhāne, ekhāne,* 'here, here' as Sri Ramakrishna expressed it in Bengali. This adverb is very important for us to understand and to appreciate and to benefit from. Not only so, *dharmyam,* 'it is inseparable from *dharma*'. That means, this particular spiritual message will strengthen society, will strengthen the human bonds in society. Some religious practices can harm society, can cause breaking away of human relations. All sorts of cheap mystical philosophies are there that can harm society. The mother gets visions every now and then, goes to some *bhajan* party. Who will look after the baby that is at home? Mother doesn't care! There you have *adharma* attitude. Society suffers. You may get some experience, but the society is suffering much from that experience. Where the society doesn't suffer, such

a teaching is called *dharmyam.* And the teachings of great spiritual teachers are always *dharmyam.* They strengthen society, strengthen the human bonds. The *Gītā* repeatedly mentions this *dharmyam* along with *amṛtam,* i.e. the quality of being immortal. In the twelfth chapter we will come across this idea combined in the last verse. Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells there: 'My teaching is both *dharmyam* and *amṛtam*'. It makes you a unit of a healthy society; it strengthens the human bond. Along with it, it gives you the experience of the immortal, the divine in yourself: *dharmyam* and *amṛtam.* Some religions may stress only *amṛtam.* Mystical, other-worldly religions belong to that category. Others will stress only the worldly aspect, *dharmyam:* a good citizen, a good society. No higher experience. But, *My* message is *both dharmyam* and *amṛtam,* says Śrī Kṛṣṇa again in the last verse of the twelfth chapter of the *Gītā.* A comprehensive spirituality will include *dharmyam* and *amṛtam.* You are working in society, discharging your responsibilities, and while doing so, you are slowly realizing your own divine nature. What a beautiful conception and combination! Your outer journey is done along with an inner or inward journey. That inward journey is towards your own true nature as the infinite Atman. This combining of inner and outer journeys is called *dharmyam* and *amṛtam.* By your work, you strengthen society, you enrich it. By your inward penetration, you realize your own immortal dimension. One is *dharmyam*; the other is *amṛtam.* So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is saying: 'I am going to teach you a philosophy which is *pratyakṣāvagamam dharmyam.*' If the path has so many beautiful characteristics, it must be extremely difficult. Not at all, *susukham kartum,* 'easy to do'. No kind of *abracadabra* is given in the name of this religion. Some people want a religion which is mysterious, un-understandable. They will say that if you give me something understandable, that is not religion; I will go to another teacher, and he will tell me something truly mysterious; then I will be satisfied; *that* is their idea of religion. I have seen this type in many situations. Anything straight and simple, we don't want. They are just like our village people who come to the doctor. If the doctor gives a small tablet, some patients will say: 'no, we want injection.' Some people behave like that in religion also. Here, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that a mature mind understands and appreciates a path which is *susukham kartum,* 'easy to do', very simple. But, it is also *avyayam,* the fruit is 'infinite', 'imperishable'.

Though it is simple, it will give a *phalam* or fruit which is *avyayam* or imperishable.

This is the introduction to this great subject which Śrī Kṛṣṇa is expounding in the ninth chapter: *spiritual realization, here and now, in the context of life and work and inter-human relations.* That must be a universal philosophy for all people.

I wish to give the story of my experience of people seeking magical and mysterious religion. I went to Kashmir from Karachi in 1944 with a friend. We spent quite a bit of time in Srinagar during which we met a person who was a disciple of a guru. In the course of talking while taking tea with him, he asked me a question. He said, 'My guru has given me a *mantra* and a method of meditation, and he told me: "when you meditate, you must have 35,000 cycles in meditation." Swamiji, I am trying my best, I have got only 25,000 cycles.' I couldn't make head or tail of what he said. What is the cycles in meditation? Some scientific jargon has been given by the guru to his disciple, and the disciple was very happy with it. I could not give any reply. After some talk, we took leave of him and went away. On the way, near the Śaṅkarācārya hill, children were throwing stones on a tree and a big beehive was disturbed. Bees started flying here and there. We thought we were quite safe. But, one bee came and stung me and another stung my friend in the back of the neck. We drove the bee away and started walking as if nothing serious had happened. First minute, there was no trouble. But after the first minute, both of us had a severe pain and there was headache. Then my friend turned to me and said jokingly: 'now it has become 35,000 cycles!'

So, this expression *susukham kartum* and *avyayam* means, 'easy to do but the fruit is infinite.' Love of God is a simple matter, and the fruit is infinite. Why don't you do so? Realizing one's own nature as the Atman is simple. There is nothing mysterious about it. But no! Many people want religious life to be as complicated as possible. For them, what one doesn't understand is *brahmavidyā*! What one understands is not, because it has nothing mysterious in it. That is ordinary people's general understanding of the subject. Even the word *brahmavidyā* is translated as 'something un-understandable' in many expositions in our country. But actually,

brahmavidyā is simple. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to tell it here that it is extremely simple. But, people go on listening and saying that they do not understand it, but they also say that it is wonderful. What one does not understand is wonderful! But what do you mean by 'wonderful'? Many traditional presentations of religion are like this. But the *Gītā* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa present the subject in an easily understandable style: *pratyakṣāvagamam* and *susukham kartum,* as the second verse puts it. Magic and mystery, these have nothing to do with the science of religion.

We have associated all this with religion during our superstition-steeped period of history. Today, we are living in an age of science. Verifiable, communicable truths are there in science; so also, in the world of religion as expounded in the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*. Nowhere else in the world will you get this teaching of the spiritual nature of the human being as the Atman, the ever free, ever pure Self of the human being, which all can realize. That is what the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* also says: *aupaniṣadam puruṣam pracchāmaḥ.* The student asked the teacher: 'We are asking you about the *puruṣa* taught in the Upaniṣad'. And Śaṅkara comments: *upaniṣadsu eva vijñāyate, na anyatra*, 'this teaching is found only in the Upaniṣads, nowhere else'. And today, it is appealing to millions of people in India and in the other parts of the world as well. That is why it is a simple spiritual teaching which says, 'manifest the ever-present divine within'. And this teaching is being given to Arjuna who is free from jealousy, *anasūyave,* 'to you who has no jealousy'—such a mind can manifest the Atman. When fire is covered by ashes, fire doesn't manifest. When you remove the ashes, fire manifests itself. Let me do that. If I start on that road, it is simple: *susukham kartum.* Effort is required, but it is worth trying. You find results. You see yourself becoming better, and still better. One can have a happier relationship with wife or husband and with all other people when this change comes in a person. That is the thinking by which we experiment on this teaching. We try to verify the teaching, and we see the fruit of the teaching: more happy human relations, more peace, more strength of mind, more compassion. So Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here: *pratyakṣāvagamam, dharmyam, susukham kartum, avyayam.* The fruit is infinite. What a beautiful description of the teaching that is coming hereafter!

Some years ago, I gave a parlour talk in Calcutta before a group of people. The subject I chose was, *Ecstasy in daily life*. It was a very beautiful evening. All enjoyed it. How can we get ecstasy in daily life? Now, ecstasy is a wonderful experience. You lose gravitational pull through ecstasy. You can get it through wine or other inebriants. That is also ecstasy. But, that is a dangerous and eventually harmful ecstasy. However, there is a spiritual method to develop that ecstasy. That is called *bhakti* as taught in this particular chapter. Here and now, let me love the Divine who is within me and in all others. Let me dedicate all my actions to him. In this way, when we practise spirituality, we live in ecstasy throughout the day. The housewife, though attending to so many activities of the household from morning till evening, is full of a sense of joy within. That joy comes from *bhakti* to the divine that is within which we have touched a little through our spiritual practice. Even a momentary touch can give us a great sense of elevation. That is the meaning of the subject, *Ecstasy in daily life.* The great teaching of *bhakti* in India was meant to give us that ecstasy. A *bhakta* is always ecstatic. How they sing! What a beautiful ecstasy comes out in the songs composed by our great poets and singers of religion, north and south, east and west! You will find real ecstasy in those wonderful songs which they composed. They poured out what they experienced within themselves. And so, these are the things which must inspire us today. A change of character, a change of attitude, a change of personality has taken place, because one great truth has come into our life: that is the all-loving God Himself, the most universal presence has come in me and into my life. Everything has changed. What Sri Ramakrishna said: 'you put a series of zeroes, they have no value at all; as soon as you put a "1" behind them, everything becomes full of value.' Every new zero adds to the value of the number.

That is how ecstasy in daily life becomes possible by clearly understanding the great teachings given by the *Gītā. Gītā* will convert everyone of us into such a centre of spirituality, of joy. God is *ānanda svarūpa,* of the nature of joy; we get a touch of that joy. *Raso vai saḥ* is a wonderful teaching in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad.* What is God? 'He is verily *rasa* or bliss', and a little of that *rasa* makes all of us in this world very happy. We live because of that *rasa.* Now, Śrī Kṛṣṇa invites us to be in

search of that *rasa* directly. Till now it was coming through various sources like the food we eat or the sensory objects we enjoy. The same *rasa* coming through these in small driblets. Śrī Kṛṣṇa asks us to go directly to the source of all *rasa,* the Lord Himself. That is why it is an intensely practical proposition. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa showed His universal Form to Arjuna in the eleventh chapter—we shall come to that in due course—Śaṅkarācārya introduces the last verse of that chapter, verse 55, thus: *adhunā sarvasya gītā śāstrasya sārabhūtaḥ artho niḥśreyasārthaḥ anuṣṭheyatvena samuccitya ucyate,* 'In order to convey the essence of the entire *Gītā śāstra* which leads one to spiritual freedom here and now, *Bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa says':

Mat karmakṛt mat paramo madbhaktaḥ saṅgavarjitaḥ;
Nirvairaḥ sarva bhūteṣu yaḥ sa mām eti pāṇḍava —

What a simple statement it is! 'O Arjuna, one who does all works as a dedication to Me, who makes Me his or her supreme Goal, who is My devotee, who is free from attachment, who cherishes no hatred towards anybody, such a one will realize Me.' Now, that is a teaching that one can practise in life. For this, one can get plenty of inspiration from our literature, from our *purāṇas,* and from our various hymns. Instead of running after magic and miracles, this is something that we should now concentrate upon; and the *Gītā* is a wonderful guide from that point of view. Here we have studied two verses giving us the introduction to this wonderful path. How can it be? *Pratyakṣāvagamam*—'it can be lived in day-to-day life', a realization that will inspire our day-to-day life. That is the challenge that *we* have to take, and verify or falsify. If I falsify it, very often it may be so because *I* am not up to the mark. Every scientist is not equally capable. One may falsify a scientific truth. But that may be only because the method adopted has been wrong. Other scientists, much more thoroughgoing, may say it is quite correct. So, falsification effort is also necessary for a test of scientific truth. Yes, but verification is the more important method. So, in this matter you can either verify or falsify; it is up to you. But, consider well whether you have been competent enough to either verify or falsify this truth. If you are truly capable, you will only verify it because many others before you have verified it already. Thousands, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said earlier in the fourth chapter: *bahavo*

jñānatapasā pūtā madbhāvam āgatāḥ, 'many have realized this truth, have gone beyond relativity, through the *tapas* of *jñāna*'. *Tapas* of *jñāna, tapas* of *bhakti*; at the highest level both are the same. And this is the promise in the beginning of this ninth chapter, the *jñāna-vijñāna* chapter.

The most important stress in the second verse is on that term *pratyakṣāvagamam,* 'which can be experienced in day-to-day life'. That God can be a constant awareness in day-to-day life because He is our own innermost Self. This has been verified by many saints—Hindu, Muslim or Christian. That is the main thrust of the whole verse. Therefore, as Sri Ramakrishna said: 'there, there'—that is how many people speak of God or religion, as something far away—that is *ajñāna.* 'Here, here', that is *jñāna.* In Bengali he said, *śekhāne, śekhāne ajñān; ekhāne, ekhāne jñān.* That is the importance of this phrase: *pratyakṣa avagama.* Any working person can have spiritual awareness. It is the birthright of all. Only, we must take this fact into account that something is hiding in this body-mind complex. The eyes and all the senses go *out* and see the reality outside. They must also be able to find out what is the reality *within* themselves. That is where pure spiritual development takes place. With this, that outer life will be richer and richer. That is the importance of this statement, *pratyakṣāvagamam.* If a God is 'there', far away in the universe, we can never make Him a subject of *pratyakṣāvagamam. But because God is presented as the one inner Self of all, of the nature of pure Consciousness, we can experience Him here and now in day-to-day life.* This is the importance of the message of the *Gītā.* It is meant for all: working people as well as for all those ascetics who have no work to do. But, this is specially meant for the working people. 'Universalisation of the spiritual life', this understanding must come to us. Those who do not have this understanding, they live an ad hoc life, day to day and minute to minute, without any far-sight and foresight, without any goal towards which the whole of life-activities are to be directed. That is the theme of the next verse, verse 3:

अश्रद्दधानाः पुरुषा धर्मस्यास्य परन्तप ।
अप्राप्य मां निवर्तन्ते मृत्युसंसारवर्त्मनि ॥३॥

Aśraddadhānāḥ puruṣā dharmasyāsya parantapa;

Aprāpya mām nivartante mṛtyu samsāra vartmani — 9. 3

'Persons without *śraddhā* or faith in this *dharma*, return, O scorcher of foes, without attaining Me, to the path of rebirth fraught with death.'

Those who have no *śraddhā* in this teaching, no conviction about this teaching, nihilistic type of people, extremely worldly-minded people to whom things which can be touched and handled alone are true, to all such people, who do not have any faith in this wonderful reality that is hidden within all of us, *aśraddadhānāḥ puruṣā*, such 'people lacking in faith'; *dharmasyāsya*, 'of this *dharma*', of this philosophy; *parantapa,* 'O Arjuna'; *aprāpya mām nivartante*, 'without realizing Me, without attaining Me, they return'; return whereto? *Mṛtyu samsāra vartmani*, 'to this path of *samsāra* which is fraught with *mṛtyu* or death'. This is the idea of all spiritual teaching. There is this ordinary human life. Many people feel that this sense-bound life is only a surface life. There is a deeper dimension to life. It is that investigation which the sages undertook in the Upaniṣads. What is the depth dimension of this human personality? On the surface, it is this little ego centred in this genetic system, seeking organic satisfaction. That is the human being on the surface. But a deeper enquiry reveals some infinite spiritual dimension in every one. To achieve the experience of that is the purpose of this human life. In a verse of the *Hitopadeśa (Mitralābha*, verse 25) you will find this statement: 'eating, drinking and sense pleasure, a human being shares with animals.' The human being may do it with a little more refinement; that is all. But otherwise, it is just common to all: human beings and animals. What is the uniqueness of the human being? It is *dharma*. Searching for some deeper dimension of human beings and nature. That is his or her uniqueness. If that uniqueness is taken away, human beings and animals are just the same. *Dharmeṇa hīnāḥ paśubhiḥ samānāḥ*, 'take away *dharma* from human life, he or she is equal to any other beast', *Hitopadeśa* concludes. That should not be. Though endowed with this profound brain, we find plenty of men and women today who remain a beast, often a beast of prey; cheat other people, kill animals and destroy nature. If they had only directed a little energy to investigate this higher spiritual dimension within, they would have been constructive and creative. Many people want to consume more and more of material goods in what we speak of today as a consumerist civilization; and the result is that the world

is becoming bereft of many things, including forests and even animals and birds. Thus, the human being becomes the enemy of nature, and eventually one's own enemy as well. We are destroying the whole of nature. No animal destroys nature. They live in it, they are part of it. Human beings alone have the capacity either to destroy or to improve; but because one is concerned with this organic system alone, one becomes a destroyer of nature. How many birds have been destroyed all over the world so that men and women may have a feather to put on their heads or adorn their caps! So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here: *Aśraddadhānāḥ puruṣā dharmasyāsya parantapa,* 'O Arjuna, those people who have no faith or conviction in this great *dharma*'; this *dharma* that tells us that we have a dimension higher than this mere psychophysical system, that our true dimension, true nature is spiritual, and that dimension is one and the same in all, that God is hidden in all of us. What happens to those who don't have faith in this? *Aprāpya mām,* 'they don't attain to Me', the one Self in all, the pure infinite Consciousness; and, *nivartante mṛtyu samsāra vartmani,* 'they return to *samsāra* which is *mṛtyu*, which is of the nature of change and death.' They return again and again to this transmigratory existence. This is the language of this third verse. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues:

मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगदव्यक्तमूर्तिना ।
मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि न चाहं तेष्ववस्थितः ॥४॥

Mayā tatam idam sarvam jagat avyaktamūrtinā;
Mat sthāni sarva bhūtāni na cāham teṣvavasthitaḥ — 9. 4

'All this world is pervaded by Me in My unmanifested form; all beings exist in Me, but I do not dwell (exclusively) in any one of them.'

I am pervading this entire universe. *Mayā tatam idam sarvam,* 'this manifested universe, in its entirety, is pervaded by Myself.' *Tatam* means 'pervaded', 'pervaded by that infinite pure Consciousness'. You may ask this question: is the solar system pervaded by some background material? Even according to modern cosmology, that background material which exploded and became this universe, that material is *still there* in this universe. The universe is pervaded by that material which was there. If it was not there, then it would not be here also. What is not in the cause

cannot appear in the effect. Something cannot come from nothing. Only from something can something come. So, in this way, our teachers discovered this truth, that the whole world has come from Brahman, of the nature of Pure Infinite Consciousness. He is the inner Self of everything. Take a living cell; inside it the infinite Consciousness is present. It directs all the activities and processes in that living cell. So, it—the Consciousness—is *tatam,* meaning 'pervading everything'. This is a profound idea and I had said before that modern scientific thought is slowly progressing in this direction—to discovering that primordial reality behind the universe as consisting of Consciousness, not dull dead matter. That is the Vedantic way of putting it. And so, *mayā tatam idam sarvam.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa identifies Himself with that infinite reality and assumes a human form as the Divine Incarnation to do good to the world. 'Everything is pervaded by Me', *mayā tatam idam sarvam.* What is My nature? *Jagat avyakta mūrtinā,* 'I am in the world as an unmanifested form'. You cut open a thing, but you won't see infinite Consciousness there; but it is present there, unmanifest; the language is *avyakta mūrti.* No sense organ can detect it. That is the meaning that Śaṅkarācārya gives. That is the search of all science. What is that *avyakta mūrti* hidden in a piece of matter? Scientists are struggling, they are seeing many new and still newer realities within a piece of matter. And the latest is that they have discovered in nuclear science that consciousness also is part and parcel of this physical world *as the observer*. That is just the beginning. As they continue the investigation, they are bound to come to this great truth that Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in this verse. This *avyakta mūrti,* i.e. 'supreme infinite unmanifested Consciousness', is there in everything. We can detect it only with some inward penetration, both into the nature as well as into the human being. It is more easy to penetrate into human beings and discover it there than to discover it in the nature. The search into external nature will yield only hints and suggestions. But you cannot actually detect it there. That is the situation in physical science, even in biology. How do the organs develop? How do the features develop? Everything is well organized, well integrated, well related to everything else. There is a unity in the midst of diversity there. That unity is centred in the spiritual Consciousness that is present in everything. This is how the idea of this *avyakta mūrti* is understood; other things are tangible. We can see and handle them. This one you can't see, you can't handle, but you *know* it is

there. It has left its footprints on the various events of the physical world. So, *mayā tatam idam sarvam jagat avyakta mūrtinā. Jagat* itself means 'the constantly changing universe'. 'I' am there in this universe. 'I' pervade the entire universe. *Matsthāni sarva bhūtāni,* 'all beings and things exist in Me'. *Na cāham teṣu avasthitaḥ,* 'but "I" am not in them'. 'They are in Me, I am not in them,' in the sense that 'I' am not *exclusively* in any one of them. 'I' am absolutely free. So, *matsthāni sarvabhūtāni,* 'all beings exist in me'; without Me they cannot exist. But none of them can contain Me in itself in fullness. That is the nature of that infinite reality. The next *śloka* will say something more, even contradicting the statement here:

न च मत्स्थानि भूतानि पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ।
भूतभृन्न च भूतस्थो ममात्मा भूतभावनः ॥५॥

Na ca matsthāni bhūtāni paśya me yogamaiśvaram;
Bhūtabhṛt na ca bhūtastho mamātmā bhūta bhāvanaḥ—9. 5

'Nor do beings exist in Me (in reality), behold My divine *Yoga!* Bringing forth and supporting the beings, My Self does not dwell in them.'

Na ca matsthāni bhūtāni, 'things are not in Me at all'*; paśya me yogamaiśvaram,* 'see My *īśvarīya yoga,* My divine *yoga* power'. What is the nature of that *yoga* power? *Bhūtabhṛt na ca bhūtastho mama ātmā,* 'My Self sustains all beings and yet I am not caught up in any one of them'; *bhūta bhāvanaḥ,* 'I am the one that nourishes and cherishes all the beings in this universe.' The more subtle the reality, the more will these characteristics become manifest; the more gross the reality, it can not reveal these characteristics. For example, this physical body can be only in one location. It cannot be in two locations. The grosser the thing, the more is it limited by space and time. The subtler a thing, it transcends that limitation. And so, *na ca matsthāni bhūtāni paśya me yogamaiśvaram.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say later on: This *prakṛti* or nature is *Māyā.* I take hold of that *Māyā* and create all this in this way, so that I am ever-free and yet animating everything, and through those things one can slowly come to discover My true nature. The whole universe is there for you to study and to discover My true nature. There is, in particular, the human being in this universe in whom this reality finds more expression. It has left more imprints on human

experience than on external nature. By tracing those prints, you can discover Him. The words 'tracing those footprints' is a unique Upaniṣadic expression. When a cow is lost in the forest, the cowherd will search for the cow. And one method of searching is, tracing the footprints of the cow. By tracing the cow's footprints, he finds that the cow has gone to a reservoir of water. From there, the cowherd brings his cow back. Similarly, this Atman has left Its footprints on human experience; tracing the footprints, one can discover the reality that is there. So, in this way, *mama ātmā bhūtabhāvanaḥ,* 'My Self sustains everything in the universe'. An example is given in the next verse:

यथाकाशस्थितो नित्यं वायुः सर्वत्रगो महान् ।
तथा सर्वाणि भूतानि मत्स्थानीत्युपधारय ॥६॥

Yathākāśasthito nityam vāyuḥ sarvatrago mahān;
Tathā sarvāṇi bhūtāni matsthāni ityupadhāraya —9. 6

'As the mighty air, moving always everywhere, rests ever in the *Ákāśa* or space*,* even so, do understand that all beings rest in Me.'

Air is there in the atmosphere; wherever you search you find air. Similarly in religion, you do not have to go here and there, or far away, to see God. Wherever you are, the divine is there, just like oxygen. Wherever you are, you can develop the scientific mind. It is not like telling, 'I want to go *there* to breathe oxygen'. Oxygen is *here* also. Just breathe, that is all. In the same way, this *ākāśa* is all-pervading, all-containing, in which the *vāyu*, i.e. air which is *sarvatrago mahān,* 'always moving everywhere and immense in range' rests. Probably, for a few hundred miles above the earth we find air, though thinner and less dense it becomes as you go higher up and very dense at lower levels. But it is there; even far up you will find it there. But there is a limit beyond which there is no air at all. In free space there is no air. Air is only an earthly phenomenon. Even in the planets of the solar system, scientists have not found air; it is only here on earth. But the main point is, I, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, am like that *ākāśa*. *Yathākāśasthito nityam vāyuḥ sarvatrago mahān.* Just like the air which is *sarvatraga,* 'which goes everywhere'; and is *mahān,* 'immense, great'; *ākāśasthitaḥ,* 'rests in *ākāśa*'; *tathā,* 'similarly', *sarvāṇi bhūtāni matsthāni iti upadhāraya,*

‘understand that all beings are similarly established in Me.’ As air moving everywhere, immense in nature, is established in the *ākāśa* or space, so also all beings are established in Me. Please understand this truth. *Avadhāraya* means ‘please understand correctly’.

सर्वभूतानि कौन्तेय प्रकृतिं यान्ति मामिकाम् ।
कल्पक्षये पुनस्तानि कल्पादौ विसृजाम्यहम् ॥७॥

Sarvabhūtāni kaunteya prakṛtim yānti māmikām;
Kalpakṣaye punastāni kalpādau visṛjāmyaham — 9. 7

‘At the end of a *kalpa* or cosmic cycle, O son of Kuntī, all beings go back to My *Prakṛti;* at the beginning of another *kalpa,* I send them forth again.’

All beings, O Arjuna, attain to My nature at the end of a *kalpa.* A *kalpa* is Brahma’s whole day. At the end of the *kalpa,* all beings are absorbed back into Me. At the beginning of the *kalpa,* they are sent out once again. This is the idea in all astronomy; ancient Indian or modern astronomy, and in Indian Vedanta. In Semitic thought, where there is no concept of vast ages or of vast space, the concept is very much limited. However, the Indian concept is ‘infinite’. In fact an infinitesimal fraction of a second is called *truṭi* in Sanskrit. The ancient Indians have spoken of that kind of an infinitesimal fraction of time. They are useful only in dealing with atomic phenomena. But even in ancient Indian thought you will find this one-by-twelve-thousandths of a second, and all such things, in concepts like *truṭi.* Similarly, in terms of large duration, we speak of millions and millions of years. And *kalpa* is one such concept, a day of Brahmā, at the beginning of which this entire universe gets manifested, and, after a long time, at the night of Brahmā, the manifest universe returns to its original state of *avyakta,* non-manifestation. That is called a *kalpa.* And so, at the end of a *kalpa,* this is what happens. At the beginning of a *kalpa,* the whole manifest universe comes out once again. *Prakṛtim yānti māmikām. Māmikām,* ‘My *prakṛti’.* That *prakṛti* into which the universe dissolves is My nature, My own nature, My own *prakṛti. Kalpakṣaye,* ‘at the end of a *kalpa*’. *Kalpādau punaḥ tāni visṛjāmyaham,* ‘at the beginning of the *kalpa,* again I *project* them’, as the Upaniṣads express it, *visṛjāmi,* ‘project’, like a spider projects

its web out of itself, not from something external. That is one unique creature that we find as an example of cosmic creation in Indian philosophical thought.

From Brahman the world has come; in Brahman the world exists; and unto Brahman the world returns. This concept of a unity behind the universe, a unity at the beginning, middle and end of the universe, is common in Vedanta and modern science.

प्रकृतिं स्वामवष्टभ्य विसृजामि पुनः पुनः ।
भूतग्राममिमं कृत्स्नमवशं प्रकृतेर्वशात् ॥८॥

Prakṛtim svām avaṣṭabhya visṛjāmi punaḥ punaḥ;
Bhūtagrāmam imam kṛtsnam avaśam prakṛtervaśāt — 9. 8

'Animating My *Prakṛti* or Nature, I project again and again this whole multitude of beings, helpless under the sway of *Prakṛti.*'

Thus, taking hold of My *Prakṛti,* I bring forth this universe again and again, *prakṛtim svām avaṣṭabhya visṛjāmi,* 'I project', *punaḥ punaḥ,* 'again and again'. How many universes have been there before, how many will be there hereafter as well! We are only in one universe, behind which there were, and after which there will be many such universes. We cannot conceive of them now. This is only one episode in the entire creation of the universe. *Bhūtagrāmam imam kṛtsnam,* 'this entire *bhūtagrāmam,* conglomeration of things in this world', I project and take back also. *Avaśam,* 'they have no say in the matter'; the sun has no say in the matter; the stars have no say in the matter; we also have no say in the matter. That we are born of some particular parents, we had no say in the matter. We are absolutely *avaśam,* means 'dependent'. Why are we not independent? Because *prakṛter vaśāt,* we are 'in the hands of *prakṛti*'. *Prakṛti* does this for you. That is the nature of the universe. *Prakṛter vaśāt,* 'helpless under the sway of *prakṛti*'. A little thinking will make us clarify this idea. What is this? I had no say in the matter when I came into being, I shall have no say in the matter when I leave also. But, now for some time, I have some say. Not entirely, but only a little freedom is there. The human being has been given a little freedom; animals don't have even that much. Human beings

alone are a little free, beyond which one is absolutely *avaśam,* 'helpless', under the control of nature. That is the present situation.

The challenge of this situation, when faced, is what makes for spiritual development: 'I want to be free, I want to be free, I don't want to be a plaything in the hands of nature.' A *katputali* as they call it, just like a doll in the hands of nature. That is what animals are, what the sun is, what the stars are. But, a human being *can* be different. That is why this spiritual knowledge is needed—to give us that sense of freedom. 'I am free'. Where are you free? Not in your body; the body is subject to all the laws of nature. Nature's laws outside are also found in my body. They are all determined. Even psychically we are not entirely free. But, spiritually we can be free, absolutely free. That is our true nature. In this way, we are *avaśam,* helpless, just like the cattle which a cowherd takes this side, or that side, make them eat, drink or go about. *Avaśam,* 'absolutely without any independence'. Nature taken as a whole makes its products *avaśam.* All the items in nature are *avaśam,* 'subject to nature's control'. This is the challenge which the human being *alone* can face. Why should *I* be *avaśam*? No animal can question this situation. But a human being *can* question, *has* questioned and *has* found the answer: 'I can be free, I can be free', *āzād, āzād.* Swami Vivekananda used to say, 'I am free, I am free'. That truth must be realized. I am not a mere plaything in the hands of nature. Nature says: 'weep', and you weep! Nature says: 'smile' and you smile! Why is this so? Can't one determine this for oneself? One can, provided one struggles to manifest one's divine nature. So, the word *avaśam* has a great meaning. It is a fact of daily experience, but this experience can be eliminated. When we get rid of this *Māyā,* then we become free. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say this later on that one can get rid of this *Māyā,* and realize one's true nature—one's affinity to that infinite reality which is beyond *Māyā*. Our real affinity is there, and not in this world of *Māyā*.

न च मां तानि कर्माणि निबध्नन्ति धनञ्जय ।
उदासीनवदासीनमसक्तं तेषु कर्मसु ॥९॥

Na ca mām tāni karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya;
Udāsīnavat āsīnam asaktam teṣu karmasu — 9. 9

‘These acts do not bind me, sitting as one neutral, unattached to them, O Dhanañjaya.’

I am doing all this: projecting the world and taking the world back inside. Do I suffer through all these actions? Not at all. They do not bind Me at all. I am ever-free because I am unattached. *Nibadhnanti* means ‘make for bondage’. It does not make for bondage for Me. Why? *Udāsīnavat āsīnam,* ‘I am indifferent to all these actions.’ Actions are going on, but I am not very much involved in it. That sense of detachment is there. *Asaktam teṣu karmasu,* ‘I am unattached to those actions’. That is Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s own example, the divine example. We can also have the same situation. We can do plenty of work without any sense of attachment, and without feeling any tension of work. Śrī Kṛṣṇa told this even in the third chapter, giving his example: if you can work in a spirit of detachment, you become free, work will not bind you. Normally, work binds; the more you work, the more you get into bondage. But it need not be so. There is another dimension in us where everything is freedom. If you develop spiritual awareness, then work also ceases to be an instrument of bondage. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *udāsīnavat āsīnam asaktam teṣu karmasu,* ‘in all these actions that I do, I am not attached at all’.

In the *Mahābhārata,* you will find Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s story. He was perfectly unattached. He was very active, involved in hundreds of events, but He was always absolutely free, with no attachment at all—even without attachment to his own people, namely, the *Yādavas*. When they became power-mad and very wicked, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said: these fellows will give trouble to the whole world. So, He saw before his very eyes the whole *Yādava* race being destroyed by mutual killing in the last chapter of the history of the *Yādavas.* And so, there was perfect detachment. Kings came down from their throne at his word, but He did not want to be a king. He remained absolutely free. That kind of a detachment you can see in Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s life, and what He says here is what He was in his life. If this is the nature of the Divine, you and I can be of that nature by a little effort.

मयाऽध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सूयते सचराचरम् ।
हेतुनाऽनेन कौन्तेय जगद्विपरिवर्तते ॥१०॥

Mayā'dhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram;
Hetunānena kaunteya jagat viparivartate — 9. 10

'By reason of my over-all power, *Prakṛti* produces all this, the moving and the unmoving; the world wheels round and round, O son of Kuntī, because of this.'

I am presiding over the activities of My *prakṛti. Prakṛti* is part of Me as My *Śakti.* In fact, in modern Vedantic expressions, this is called Brahman and *Śakti,* or *Śiva* and *Śakti,* which together constitute the Ultimate Reality. One is active, the other is not active. But they are one and the same. A serpent in motion is *Śakti;* the serpent coiled up is *Śiva.* That is Sri Ramakrishna's way of putting it. Two aspects of the same Reality. Still water is *Śiva;* water thrown up in waves is *Śakti.* And these two are one; *Śiva* and *Śakti* are one; *nitya* and *līlā* are one. This is the language. *Nitya* means 'eternal Reality'; *līlā* means 'manifested universe'. Both are one and the same. That is the God of Vedanta. Impersonal plus Personal, that is the *nirguṇa-saguṇa* combination. So, *Śiva* and *Śakti,* Brahman and *Śakti* or *Māyā,* are one and the same. You see the same Reality in two aspects. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here: *Mayā'dhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram,* 'this entire world of moving and unmoving things, *cara* and *acara, prakṛti* creates, *prakṛti* projects out of herself; but, I am there only as the presiding power'. That is all, I don't do it; I am just there. Something like our President of India; the whole administration is done in his name, everybody is doing it, he himself does nothing. His very presence makes for the administrative stability. That is called *adhyakṣa. Mayā adhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ.* We say in our political language, the Speaker is the *adhyakṣa* of the Parliament or the Loka Sabhā. And the Speaker is one who speaks very little. All the speaking is done by the people occupying the benches, but not the Speaker. By his presence, things go on in the Parliament. Not so in India always, isn't it? In spite of the Speaker, things can go very bad. That must change and will change for the better in course of time. And so, *mayā adhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate,* 'projects', gives birth to; that is the meaning of *sūyate; sacarācaram,* 'all this *cara,* moving, and *acara,* unmoving, entities of the world'. *Hetunā anena,* 'by this reason'; *kaunteya,* 'O Arjuna'; *jagat viparivartate,* 'the entire evolution of the world takes place'. That is the nature of this *viparivartana* or evolution. *Viparivartana* or *viśeṣeṇa*

parivartana; how many types of evolution are taking place constantly. We have cosmic evolution, organic evolution, human evolution; all these are going on. How? By this *anena hetunā,* 'by this cause'. The One and the many are one and the same. The many are not separate from the One. From the One, the many have come. Unto the One, the many return. And the unity of the One and the many is the unity of the supreme Brahman. So, Brahman is One, Brahman is many. You can apply both the terms, *ekam* and *bahu,* to the Reality. In the manifested, it is *bahu;* within itself, it is One. Take for instance, solar radiation; these are separate, various, different. But the sun itself is a unity by itself. In this way, *hetunā anena kaunteya jagat viparivartate,* 'the world goes on transforming, evolving due to this'. This is called *jagat viparivartate,* behind which is the action of *prakṛti* stimulated by Me, the infinite Self, the infinite Divine.

अवजानन्ति मां मूढा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम् ।
परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम् ॥११॥

Avajānanti mām mūḍhā mānuṣīm tanum āśritam;
Param bhāvam ajānanto mama bhūtamaheśvaram—9. 11

'Unaware of My higher state as the great Lord of beings, fools disregard Me, when dwelling in a human form.'

This is in relation to that topic that was first expounded in the fourth chapter: divine incarnation. That infinite Brahman can appear as a divine personality. That is called *avatāra.* His external physical system is a very poor expression of what is immense within Himself. Don't measure Him in terms of the body. The body is not the measuring rod for what is inside that person. Even in ordinary people, body cannot be the measuring rod. Sometimes you will find a very simple ordinary looking person. But when you begin to talk to him, you will find that he is extraordinary. I once went to the house of a primary school teacher in Bangalore. There, I found him to be a very lean person; getting a salary of fifteen or twenty rupees. A small lighted oil lamp was there. The house was very ordinary. But, that man had immense brain and intelligence! A scholar in Sanskrit; he could speak and write beautiful Kannada, English and Sanskrit. But he looked very ordinary. So, even in ordinary human life, the externals can deceive us. Some look

fine, but they may be empty within; some look ordinary, but they are extraordinary. If that is so with regard to ordinary people, how much more true it must be with regard to a Buddha, a Jesus, a Śrī Kṛṣṇa, or a Sri Ramakrishna. They look ordinary. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is saying here: *avajānanti mām mūḍhā,* 'foolish people deride Me, do not understand Me'; *mānuṣīm tanum āśritam,* 'who has taken this human body', they treat Me like anybody else. Why so? *Mama param bhāvam ajānanto,* 'not knowing My higher nature'. What is that higher nature of Mine? *Bhūtamaheśvaram,* 'the supreme Lord of the entire universe'. That dimension people are not able to grasp. Therefore, they speak ill of Me, they insult Me; *avajānanti* means 'insulting'. This is why great teachers have to suffer. Jesus had to suffer, Śrī Kṛṣṇa had to suffer, Śrī Rāma had to suffer. So many accusations are there against these great personalities, great within and ordinary without; and naturally, people misunderstand. Ordinary people misunderstand, but not great sages, not spiritually inclined people. They understand the dimension of this remarkable human being in front of them. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *avajānanti mām mūḍhā,* 'foolish people deride Me', *mānuṣīm tanumāśritam,* 'when adopting the human body'. Why? *Param bhāvam ajānanto mama bhūtamaheśvaram,* 'I am that infinite reality behind all this universe; that dimension they cannot understand.'

One day, Sri Ramakrishna was walking in the rose garden in Dakshineswar. One Babu (gentleman) came and saw Sri Ramakrishna there. He took him to be the gardener. 'Will you please pluck a rose flower for me?' Sri Ramakrishna gently plucked a flower and presented it to him. After some time, Sri Ramakrishna came to his room and sat; many devotees were sitting there, and he was talking with them. The Babu entered the room because he had come to Dakshineswar to meet Sri Ramakrishna. And he found that gardener sitting there! He was so exasperated. What did I do! But Sri Ramakrishna said: it is a great privilege to serve; you wanted a flower, I gave it to you. See the language there. So, that is how we mistake great people. They look ordinary, but they are extraordinary. I myself have come across some people, extraordinary within, but outwardly very ordinary. Therefore, we should not judge people from merely their appearance. There may be tremendously great people among them. Just like what we find in Śaṅkarācārya's life. He walked all over our vast India. How

could anyone understand his greatness? Vivekananda walked through the whole of India. How few could understand his greatness! They saw in them a *sādhu* or a monk. How can we go deep into their greatness unless we are great ourselves? So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here: to discover an *avatāra* is extremely difficult. And, to discover even an ordinarily great person is also difficult, because we cannot measure that inner dimension. We measure the external dimension which we can really calculate. The height, length, size, appearance, all these we can study. But their mental level, we cannot study. It is good, therefore, to keep an open mind in judging other people. A poor man comes to a house for alms; he looks poor, but he may be a great poet and devotee like Purandara Dāsa of Karnataka. Purandara Dāsa was a rich man. One day, he distributed all his riches, became a poor *dāsa* or wandering minstrel, going from house to house singing his divine compositions before the people. They took him to be a beggar. Actually he was a prince. But he looked like a beggar. He knew that he had the Divine Reality within him. In this way, Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks of the Divine Incarnation as a subject of still more difficult comprehension. It is like Jesus Christ being referred to as a carpenter's son! *Param bhāvam ajānanto mama bhūtamaheśvaram.* What kind of mentality do they of the *mūḍhā* or foolish type have?

मोघाशा मोघकर्माणो मोघज्ञाना विचेतसः ।
राक्षसीमासुरीं चैव प्रकृतिं मोहिनीं श्रिताः ॥१२॥

Moghāśā mogha karmāṇo moghajñānā vicetasaḥ;
Rākṣasīm āsurīm caiva prakṛtim mohinīm śritāḥ — 9. 12

'Of vain hopes, of vain works, of vain knowledge, and senseless, they verily are possessed of the delusive nature of *Rākṣasas* and *Asuras.*'

Such people have *moghāśāḥ,* 'vain hopes', all sorts of vain hopes they cultivate in their minds. Similarly, *mogha karmāṇaḥ,* 'doer of vain actions'; *moghajñānaḥ,* 'of vain knowledge'; and *vicetasaḥ,* 'senseless', without any kind of real understanding. *Rākṣasīm āsurīm caiva prakṛtim mohinīm śritāḥ*, 'they are really possessed of the delusive nature of *Rākṣasas* and *Asuras*.' Such people have no faith in higher values. If a great person like a

Śaṅkarācārya goes to anybody's house, such people would think: 'he is only a beggar'.

There is a beautiful episode in Buddha's life. There is much charm and poetry in that episode. When Buddha, with a clean shaven head, was going from one village to another, once slight rains descended. He stood under the eaves of the hut of a farmer. Then a conversation between the two took place (*Daniya Sutta, Sutta Nipāta,* vv. 18–34; according to scholars, the *Sutta Nipāta* contains some of the oldest parts of the Pāli Canon):

'Cooked is my rice, milked are my kine', said Dhaniya, the herd, 'And here on Mahī's bank I dwell with them that are my peers. Thatched is my hut, well-fed the fire. Rain down, God, if Thou wilt!'

'From anger free, with every bar removed,' the Lord replied, 'A dweller here on Mahī's bank I sojourn but one night. Roofless my hut and quenched my fire. Rain down, God, if Thou wilt!'

'No gadflies here are to be seen,' said Dhaniya the herd, 'Amid the marshland grasses there my kine a-roaming go. The rain that comes they can endure. Rain down, God, if Thou wilt!'

'I made a raft to cross the stream, of logs well put together. Now have I crossed and gone beyond, by stemming on the Flood. So now I need my rafts no more. Rain down, God, if Thou wilt!'

'My wife she is a loyal one—no wanton,' said the herd. 'Full many a day she's dwelt with me, and she is kind and dear. I hear no man speak ill of her. Rain down, God, if Thou wilt!'

'My mind is a docile one, set free,' the Lord replied. 'Full many a day I tamed it down and shaped it to my will. No evil now is found in me. Rain down, God, if Thou wilt!'

'By the labour of my hands I live,' said Dhaniya the herd. 'My children, they all dwell with me and they are stout and strong. Of them I hear no word of ill. Rain down, God, if Thou wilt!'

'I too, I am a slave to none,' the Exalted one replied, 'And by the powers I have won I roam through all the world. I have no need for service more. Rain down, God, if Thou wilt!'

‘Kine have I, yea, and calves that suck,’ said Dhaniya the herd, ‘and cow in calf, and they shall carry on their breed for me. And a bull, the lord of all the herd. Rain down, God, if Thou wilt!’

‘I have no kine, I have no calves that suck,’ the Lord replied. ‘I have no cows in calf to carry on the breed for me. No bull, the lord of all the herd. Rain down, God, if Thou wilt!’

‘Well-set the pegs that hold my kine; shaken they cannot be. My tethers, made of *munja* grass, brand new and twisted well. No sucking calf can break ’em. So rain down, God, if Thou wilt!’

‘But I, the Bull, have burst the bonds that bind,’ the Lord replied. ‘Have burst them as a tusker rends the twisted creeper-cords. Never again shall I be born. Rain down, God, if Thou wilt!’

Forthwith the mighty rain poured down and filled the hills and plains. When he heard the raining of the God, Dhaniya thus spoke his mind:

‘No little gain is ours that we the Exalted One have seen. In Thee we take our refuge, Thou that hast the eye to see. Be Thou our teacher, mighty sage. The good wife and myself, Docile, will live the holy life with Thee, O happy one, and passing over birth and death an end of suffering make!’

How difficult it is to understand greatness! Don’t rush to make a judgement. We often do so; but we must learn to treat everyone with respect. Who knows that he, who in the form of the beggar has come to my house, may be a Buddha. He may be a Śaṅkarācārya. We don’t know. That kind of respect is good so that we do not commit a blunder through misjudging another human being and showing disrespect. When these *Rākṣasī* and *Ásurī* qualities come, then we commit all these mistakes. We judge a man only in terms of money. We don’t judge him in terms of his brains, in terms of his spiritual quality. How much money you have? You are poor! Okay, get out! We don’t want you.

That is what king Drupada did to Droṇa as described in the *Mahābhārata* Epic. Droṇa was a classmate of Drupada. He was very poor. Drupada became a king of Pāñcāla. Droṇa said to Kṛṣṇa: ‘Let us go to Drupada. He may give us some help. There is not enough in the house. I can’t feed my children with a glass of milk even.’ And that story is so

tragic. Droṇa goes to Drupada, calls him his friend, and Drupada becomes very proud. 'What! You call me a friend! Friendship is only between equals. You are a beggar. I am a king. How can there be friendship between the two? Go away. I can't do anything for you.' He uttered the most dangerous words. This created the tragedy of the Kurukṣetra war later on. This is one of the tragic beginnings. This is how evils go on multiplying until a big conflagration takes place. That is the story in the *Mahābhārata.*

In this way, this verse says: whenever we are subject to pride, vanity, arrogance, selfishness, we are in the grip of *Ásurī sampat.* Chapter 16 will be discussing *Ásurī sampat* and *Daivī sampat.* Here in chapter 9 just a reference is made to *Ásurī sampat*. Those who have the *Ásurī sampat,* they are of this nature. Deluded they are, *prakṛtim mohinīm śritāḥ,* 'possessed of *Māyā* or *Prakṛti* which has a *mohinī* quality, deluding quality'.

Sri Ramakrishna has said: *Māyā* has two dimensions, *Avidyā Māyā* and *Vidyā Māyā. Avidyā Māyā* is what makes for delusion and delusive actions. *Vidyā Māyā* lifts one to higher and higher levels. One can choose between *Vidya Māyā* and *Avidyā Māyā.* A heart can become the playground of *Vidyā Māyā.* Then, *Daivī sampat* manifests; compassion, love, a spirit of service, truthfulness, all these will come. When there is *Avidyā Māyā* playing in the heart, then selfishness, pettiness, violence, hatred, exploitation, all these will operate. So, *prakṛtim mohinīm śritāḥ,* 'that is the *prakṛti, Māyā,* which is *mohinī,* which is of delusive nature'. What a wonderful idea! *Mohinī* is the form that Viṣṇu took to lure away the *Asuras* during the *samudramanthan* (churning of ocean) episode when *Amṛta* (nectar) came out. That is *mohinī*; very delusive. And therefore, in this life also, nature appears to you as a *mohinī* to delude you. Be careful about that delusion. Try to develop *Vidyā Śakti, Vidyā Māyā,* and then that delusion will not overpower you. Even if something comes to delude you, you won't be deluded. You will be free. You will be above it. That is how we win our freedom. We are free to accept the delusive *Māyā* or that elevating *Māyā.* We are all in *Māyā.* When you do evil, you are in *Māyā.* When you do good, you are in *Māyā.* When you sit in meditation, you are in *Māyā. Māyā* pervades everything. That is the divine *Śakti* in the two forms of *Avidyā Māyā* and *Vidyā Māyā.*

The next *śloka* explains the action of *Vidyā Māyā* or *Daivī Sampat*. How does it operate in you and in me? These are very practical ideas. They give us hints and suggestions to make our life really progressive, really pure and good, so that we can live at peace with others and within oneself. The next *śloka* deals with that positive side of life, *Vidyā Māyā, Māyā* which has no delusive power, which has the power to lift you up to higher levels. This is extremely practical and productive of great results. You want a happy family. I wish we have millions of happy homes. How can happy families come unless the members of the family are motivated by *Vidyā Māyā?* If they are motivated by *Avidyā Māyā,* there will be no peace in the family. So, this is a question which everyone must ask oneself. Every boy and girl must ask this question: Do you want your heart to be a playground of *Avidyā Māyā* or *Vidyā Māyā?* The answer must come: '*Vidyā Māyā.'* Then, struggle for it. When such persons enter into married life, they will have the happiest family life; the real joy of a householder's life one will get in that condition. That is the practical utility of this great teaching.

There is one type of people who deride Me, not knowing My higher nature, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. They can't see through this physical form of Mine. They are the ordinary people, steeped in ignorance, with vain hopes and vain actions, etc. But there is another type of people, who are *sāttvika;* they can understand these things. The next verse, verse 13, says:

महात्मानस्तु मां पार्थ दैवीं प्रकृतिमाश्रिताः ।
भजन्त्यनन्यमनसो ज्ञात्वा भूतादिमव्ययम् ॥१३॥

Mahātmānastu mām pārtha daivīm prakṛtim āśritāḥ;
Bhajanti ananya manaso jñātvā bhūtādim avyayam—9. 13

'But the great-souled ones, O son of Pṛthā, possessed of the Divine *Prakṛti*, knowing Me to be the origin of beings and immutable, worship Me with single-mindedness.'

Mahātmānastu, 'but those who are *mahātmas,* whose self is not exhausted within this body; they see the same Self in all'. They have become really great and big; so they are called *mahātmas.* They know Me as the supreme Divine Reality; how? *Daivīm prakṛtim āśritāḥ,* 'they are

under the control of *Daivī sampat*', the higher *sāttvika* attitudes, which will be detailed later on in the 16th chapter as referred to earlier. When *Daivī sampat* predominates, everything is positive, everything is creative, going onward on the path of higher and higher moral and spiritual evolution. But, *tamas* and *rajas* which are called *Āsurī sampat,* when these predominate, one is absolutely worldly, petty-minded and quarrelsome. Very often one will find plenty of such people in any society. They want to pick up some quarrel, and wait for an occasion to do so. That type of people are highly controlled by *rākṣasī* and *āsurī* attitudes. So, *mahātmānaḥ* are controlled by *daivī sampat*; *daivīm prakṛtim āśritāḥ.* What do they do? *Bhajanti,* 'they worship' Me; they understand My higher spiritual dimension; *ananya manaso,* 'with a one-pointed mind'; *jñātvā bhūtādim avyayam,* 'knowing Me to be *bhūtādim,* the origin of the whole universe, and, *avyayam,* imperishable'. That is My true nature. And these *mahātmas* understand that that Reality sometimes appears as a human being. Therefore, they worship Me in spirit and in truth.

In the 14th verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains how they worship. When we have a *sāttvika* mind, our worship of God becomes constant; there is not a particular time for it. When we begin our spiritual life, we fix some time for going to the temple, or for sitting in prayer and meditation, etc. But when the mind becomes *sāttvika,* when we achieve that kind of purity inside, then it becomes a constant worship of the Divine. Even in the midst of work and all human relations, that worship will go on. That is being expressed in the 14th verse.

सततं कीर्तयन्तो मां यतन्तश्च दृढव्रताः ।
नमस्यन्तश्च मां भक्त्या नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ॥१४॥

Satatam kīrtayanto mām yatantaśca dṛḍhavratāḥ;
Namasyantaśca mām bhaktyā nityayuktā upāsate — 9. 14

'Glorifying Me always and striving with firm resolve, bowing down to Me in devotion, always steadfast, they worship Me.'

The *nityayuktas,* 'those who are always *yogīs*', not those half-an-hour-*yogīs,* but all through they are *yogīs. Nityayukta,* 'constantly in a spiritual

mood'. How do such people 'worship Me', *upāsate*? *Satatam kīrtayanto mām,* 'constantly singing My glory', singing mentally or orally My divine glory; *yatantaśca dṛḍhavratāḥ,* 'striving with steady practice', i.e. full of effort, with the mind constantly oriented to the Divine. *Dṛḍha* means firm, *vratāḥ* means resolve; *dṛḍhavratāḥ* means 'of firm resolve'. *Namasyantaśca mām bhaktyā,* 'saluting Me with great devotion'. There may not be actual physical salutation. But the mind is in the mood of salutation all the time. There is that spirit of humility born of the understanding that the Divine is manifest in all beings. There is no pride. There is no small ego. So, that constant salutation of the Divine, not necessarily physical, but always mental. *Bhaktyā,* 'through great devotion'. *Nityayuktā upāsate,* 'that is how the *nityayuktas* worship Me'. Constant and spontaneous worship, adoration, prostration going on. They may or may not do it physically, but inwardly they are always in that mood—seeing the same Atman everywhere. So, what happens to that person? 'This state makes a person constantly salute the Divine everywhere, always feeling oneness with all.' What one practices with effort—practices like *śānta, dānta,* 'self-control, and control of the senses', etc., all such practices become natural in that state. The whole thing comes to him or her in a natural spontaneous way. There is a beautiful verse towards the end of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Kārikā* (IV. 86). A person of spiritual realization is *naturally* pure, *naturally* humble, *naturally* concerned with others, because he or she feels oneness with all. *That concept and value of spontaneity and naturalness is expressed there.* Where do you find spontaneity in this world? You find it in children. They are spontaneous. This is the first type of spontaneity. That is why men of realization are compared to little children. There is no cleverness in them. Absolutely spontaneous, natural. When they say 'yes', it means 'yes'; when they say 'no', it means 'no'. That is childlike spontaneity. It is a very great state of mind. Sri Ramakrishna said: '*Paramahamsas* are like children of five years of age.' They are so natural, so spontaneous. There is no ego in them. That is the nature of the highest realization.

So, here, *namasyantaśca mām bhaktyā nityayuktā upāsate,* 'they salute Me with devotion constantly, all the time; they practice humility all the

time'. This is the state of spiritual realization when the little 'I' vanishes forever. Something infinite, which is one with all, finds manifestation.

ज्ञानयज्ञेन चाप्यन्ये यजन्तो मामुपासते ।
एकत्वेन पृथक्त्वेन बहुधा विश्वतोमुखम् ॥१५॥

Jñānayagñena cāpyanye yajanto mām upāsate;
Ekatvena pṛthaktvena bahudhā viśvatomukham — 9. 15

'Others, too, sacrificing by the *Yajña* of knowledge (i.e. seeing the Self in all), worship Me, the All-Formed, as one, as distinct, as manifold.'

Jñānayajñena cāpyanye yajanto mām upāsate, 'other people worship Me through *jñānayajña,* sacrifice of knowledge.' This subject came up for discussion in the fourth chapter also. Through *jñānayajña* some devotees worship Me. How do they worship? *Ekatvena, pṛthaktvena,* 'either realizing oneness with all, or by realizing the separateness of God from human beings and becoming a servant of God.' That is the sense of *pṛthaktva.* A *bhakta* takes God as separate, and himself or herself as a devotee worshipping the Divine. That is the attitude in *bhakti. Jñāna* is the attitude, 'I am Brahman', 'I am the ultimate Reality'. Both are very high states of spiritual experience. *Bahudhā,* 'in various forms'; *viśvatomukham,* that Reality which is everywhere, 'whose face is turned everywhere'. That is the nature of the highest Reality.

One day, Sri Ramakrishna asked Narendra: 'what kind of realization do you like to have? Suppose there is honey in a bowl; do you want to get into the honey and get merged in it, or do you want to sit on the edge and drink a little?' Narendra replied, 'Of course, I want to sit on the edge and drink.' 'Why?' asked Sri Ramakrishna. Narendra said, 'If I get in, I will die!' Then Sri Ramakrishna smiled and said: 'But this is not the usual honey. This is the immortal *Saccidānanda* honey in which if you are well immersed you are not going to die! You will get fuller life. Don't fear like a worldly person.' A *bhakta* desires to enjoy that honey, to enjoy the love of God. He or she does not want to become one with God. That is the nature of *bhakti.* Therefore, in *jñāna* one will say, '*Śivo'ham'.* A *bhakta* will say, 'I am a *dāsa* or servant of Śiva, I am a child of Śiva.' He or she wants Śiva to be

separate to enjoy him, to taste the love of God. 'I am *viśvatomukha*'; you can worship Me in any way. That is why there is no fixed standard. 'I am everywhere.' Every worship comes to Me. That is the Hindu conception out of which has come the spirit of tolerance and understanding in our culture for all these thousands of years.

अहं क्रतुरहं यज्ञः स्वधाहमहमौषधम् ।
मन्त्रोऽहमहमेवाज्यमहमग्निरहं हुतम् ॥१६॥

Aham kratuḥ aham yajñaḥ svadhāham aham auṣadham;
Mantro'ham ahamevājyam ahamagniraham hutam — 9. 16

'I am the *kratu,* I am the *yajña,* I am the *svadhā,* I the *auṣadha,* I am the *mantra,* I am the *ājya,* I the fire, and I the oblation.'

It is I who manifest myself as the various ingredients of worship and sacrifice. They are all one and the same reality. *Aham kratuḥ,* 'I am the sacrifice'; *kratu* is the Vedic sacrifice. *Aham yajñaḥ,* 'I am the *yajñaḥ';* that is also another form of Vedic sacrifice. *Svadhāham,* 'I am that *mantra, svadhā'.* When you offer something you will say, *svāhā* or *svadhā;* both are *mantras* used for offering oblations. *Aham auṣadham,* 'I am also *auṣadha,* medicine'. Then, *mantro'ham,* 'I am the *mantra*, which you recite'. *Aham eva ājyam,* 'I am also the ghee that is poured into the fire'. That is called *ājyam. Aham agniḥ,* 'the fire into which one pours the ghee, that also is Myself'. *Aham hutam,* 'I am the oblation'. The act of oblation also is Myself. This idea had come in verse 24 of the 4th chapter:

Brahmārpaṇam brahma havirbrahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam;
Brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahmakarmasamādhinā —

What a beautiful idea! How true it is! 'The offering is Brahman; the one who offers is Brahman; the fire is Brahman; the result is Brahman'; everything is Brahman. That is the truth, but we do see differences, and so, we observe these differences. But the truth is they are all essentially one infinite pure Consciousness appearing in these various forms.

Let us take the example of solar radiation. 'The Sun Is our Mother' was an article that appeared in the American *National Geographic* magazine some years ago. There you will find this statement: the sun is our mother.

We eat the sun in our food; we wear the sun in our cloth; we burn the sun in our coal; we digest our food through the sun in the stomach as digestive energy. Everything is sun. Life and light are intertwined, says that article. Life and light, i.e. radiation, they are intertwined. All these, whatever you see in the solar system, are only various condensations of that solar radiation. You go still further; the infinite Atman or Brahman alone exists in all these various forms. That is the message conveyed by this sixteenth verse. I am all these; Brahman alone is all these. *Sarvam khalu idam brahma,* 'certainly, everything that is in this manifested Universe, is Brahman'. *Vāsudeva sarvam iti,* 'everything in this world is Vāsudeva'. That is the Advaitic vision. Everything has come from the One. Therefore, it is all that One. The cause is in the effect. So, you can say, whatever you see in the effect is nothing but the cause. There is nothing new in this universe. You can find in this universe nothing other than that primordial stuff out of which the universe, according to modern cosmology, evolved. And we have conservation laws: conservation of energy. The same energy, the totality of it, exists. Nothing is added to it, nothing is taken out of it. But, it is manipulated in different ways. So, this is the idea of absolute unity: 'from the One the universe has come; unto the One the universe will return.' This is the truth upheld in Vedanta long ago, and in essence, by modern science in our time. This is the Advaitic vision. We see our oneness with everything. We feel our oneness with nature also. If we treat it as separate, we try to exploit it, we try to destroy it. But when we know we are all essentially one, we know how to treat nature in a beneficent way. That is what is lacking in today's civilization. In older civilizations we had this concept: our intimate relationship with nature. And we are now trying to gain that understanding once again, in modern Western culture. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says further:

पिताहमस्य जगतो माता धाता पितामहः ।
वेद्यं पवित्रमोङ्कार ऋक् साम यजुरेव च ॥१७॥

Pitāham asya jagato mātā dhātā pitāmahaḥ;
Vedyam pavitram omkāra ṛk sāma yajureva ca — 9. 17

‘I am the Father of this world—the Mother, the Sustainer, the Grandfather, the (one) thing to be known, the Purifier, (the syllable) *Om*, and also the *Ṛk, Sāman,* and *Yajus*.’

I am all these: first, *pitā aham asya jagato,* ‘I am the Father of this universe’. This Fatherhood of God you can see in Judaism, Christianity and also in Islam. *Mātā,* ‘I am also the Mother of the universe’. God as the Mother, *Mātā*, that you will find only in Indian religion, and in primitive religions. *Dhātā* is ‘the one who sustains’. Then, *pitāmahaḥ,* ‘Grandfather’. *Vedyam pavitram omkāra,* ‘I am the one truth to be known, the Purifier, and I am the Om’. If you try to know anything in this world, that knowledge will eventually take you to that supreme Divine. Trace all these various entities in the universe to the root, and you will see God or Brahman there. So, *vedyam,* ‘the greatest truth to be known’ is the Origin and Sustenance of the universe. *Pavitram,* ‘supremely pure’, holy, sacred. *Omkāraḥ,* ‘the syllable *Om*’. This *pavitram*, pure, is a beautiful concept for today’s civilization, because everything that is *pavitram* has been eliminated from it. There is nothing *pavitram* today; nothing holy, nothing towards which we have to show reverence. Everything is matter of fact. That is the great weakness of modern civilization. Say, when you respect your mother you associate your mother with something special, a certain sentiment, something holy. And in today’s civilization it is not there, especially, even in the language used: ‘she is a good guy’. No sentiment. So, whatever is sacred has gone away. Even in married life, there is nothing sacred. Everything is just worldly. So, this kind of erosion of all sacredness from life has made life very very prosaic and of a low level. Here the importance of the word ‘sacred’ comes. There is one focus of sacredness in everything in this universe. Never eliminate it, never try to forget it. If neglected, the culture will become very poor. So, *pavitram omkāraḥ,* ‘the supremely sacred syllable *Om*’. *Ṛg sāma yajureva ca,* ‘and I am the three Vedas, *Ṛg Veda, Sāma Veda* and *Yajur Veda*’. Originally, we had three Vedas: *Ṛg, Sāma* and *Yajur.* A little later came the fourth Veda, *Atharva Veda.* Then it became four Vedas. All this happened in very ancient times.

गतिर्भर्ता प्रभुः साक्षी निवासः शरणं सुहृत् ।
प्रभवः प्रलयः स्थानं निधानं बीजमव्ययम् ॥१८॥

Gatiḥ bhartā prabhuḥ sākṣī nivāsaḥ śaraṇam suhṛt;
Prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānam nidhānam bījam avyayam—9. 18

'The Goal, the Supporter, the Lord, the Witness, the Abode, the Refuge, the Friend, the Origin, the Dissolution, the Substratum, the Storehouse, the Seed immutable.'

Now the Supreme Divinity is described in many ways in this verse. *Gatiḥ,* 'the Goal'; the whole universe has That as the *gatiḥ* or goal. *Bhartā,* 'the Supporter'; *bhartṛ* means to protect, to cherish, to support; so *bhartā* means Supporter. *Prabhuḥ,* 'the Lord', Master. *Sākṣi,* 'the Witness'. What is the sun? He is the witness of the solar system. He can see everything happening in the solar system. He is called *jagatsākṣi,* 'witness of the world'. God is called the Witness of the whole universe. Sun is a witness of the solar system and we are also, as the Self, the witness of our little activities here. We call it *buddhisākṣi,* 'witness of the intellect'. The Atman in us watches the activities of the *buddhi.* That is called *sākṣi. Sākṣi* is a wonderful concept in our Vedanta philosophy. In fact, whenever you develop the capacity for objective judgement, you are a *sākṣi*. An event is taking place. If you are carried away by attachment, your judgement will be wrong. If your mind is free from attachment, you will be able to see things as they are. That capacity comes from being a *sākṣi* of our own nature. See things as they are. Don't colour it with attachment or aversion. So, this Self in us has the capacity to become a *sākṣi* of our activities within this body itself. And all impartial judgements, all such objective valuations come from the point of view of *sākṣi.* Ego cannot do so. Ego is highly motivated and is under the control of the genetic system. So, *sākṣi* is a beautiful concept in our Vedantic psychology as well as philosophy. Develop a *sākṣi-bhāva* or witness attitude. That means you are able to view things dispassionately. *Sākṣi*-consciousness is a wonderful idea. You can see your own mind, your own attachments and aversions, your own foolishness, everything from behind, whereas the ego cannot see all this. Ego can see the fault of others; not one's own. Only when the ego develops the *sākṣi* awareness, then you are able to find even your own faults. So, a little *sākṣi* awareness makes for a higher type of life, a higher type of consciousness. That is how the concept of *sākṣi* comes in. And God is considered to be *buddhisākṣi,* the *sākṣi* of all *buddhis* in this world. That is a beautiful

conception. There is one who is the *sākṣi* of all these: your mind, my mind, and all these other minds. That is the Divine Being. So, one aspect of the divine is as *sākṣi.* And one aspect of man is also as *sākṣi. Nivāsaḥ,* 'the Abode', our abode is God himself. *Śaraṇam,* 'the final Destination', where we can take our refuge. And then, *suhṛt,* 'real Friend'. He is the only friend we have. The divine is the only friend we have. *Suhṛt* is the word used to mean 'constant friend'. How intimate God becomes when you consider him as *suhṛt* or friend! In the fifth chapter, the second line of the last verse referred to this:

Bhoktāram yajñatapasām sarvalokamaheśvaram;
Suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām jñātvā mām śāntimṛcchati —

Then, *prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānam,* 'I am the place of Origin and the place of Dissolution of the whole universe'. From Me the universe comes, that is *prabhavaḥ;* into Me the universe merges later, that is, *pralayaḥ sthānam. Nidhānam bījam avyayam; nidhānam,* 'the Storehouse'; *avyayam bījam,* 'the immutable seed' of the universe. A normal seed cannot be immutable. They are all mutable. Seed decays when the plant comes out. That is why a seed is called mutable. But, here is a Seed which is 'immutable', *avyayam.* This is the verse which is highly commented upon by saints in India. Sri Ramakrishna's disciples like Swami Turiyananda used to very much appreciate this verse.

This Divine Reality is what you find operating in this universe. How?

तपाम्यहमहं वर्षं निगृह्णाम्युत्सृजामि च ।
अमृतं चैव मृत्युश्च सदसच्चाहमर्जुन ॥१९॥

Tapāmyahamaham varṣam nigṛhṇāmyutsṛjāmi ca;
Amṛtam caiva mṛtyuśca sadasaccāhamarjuna — 9 .19

'(As sun) I give heat; I withhold and send forth rain; I am immortality and also death; being and non-being am I, O Arjuna!'

Arjuna, I am all these: What are they? *Tapāmi aham,* 'I send out heat'. Solar heat comes from Me. Also, *varṣam,* 'rain'. By proper manipulation in the sky, it begins to rain. *Nigṛhṇāmi utsṛjāmi ca,* 'I give forth heat and rain, I can also withdraw them'. When the season is over all these are withdrawn.

When the season is bright, they come out once again. So, going out and taking back, both are from Me. *Amṛtam caiva mṛtyuśca,* 'I am immortality as well as death'. That supreme Reality is both immortality and death. Death is not something else. The same Reality is both immortality as well as death. This is also from the *Ṛg Veda samhita* (X. viii. 121): *Yasya chāyā amṛtam yasya mṛtyuḥ*, 'whose shadow is death as well as immortality'. That is the *Ṛg Vedic* verse. So, we don't have two realities: one for life and another for death. *There is no devil in the whole of Hindu tradition*. This is all one only. That is a wonderful idea. 'All evil belongs to the devil, all good belongs to God'; we have no such conceptions. Evil and good are only relative terms. The same thing is evil, and the same thing can be good also. Nothing is all evil; nothing is all good. Today what is evil can be good tomorrow. Just like poison in a snake; it is evil. But for the snake itself, it is not evil. It is part of its nature. It isn't dying from its own poison! And we take that poison and inject it to stop bleeding. Therefore, it is no more evil. So, there are any number of occasions where what you treat as evil becomes good. What you treat as good becomes evil. Therefore, there is a relativity: the same thing appears as good in one context and as evil in another context. We never had that duality of good and evil in our tradition. In normal life, we make distinction: this is evil, this is good. Perfectly right. If we see a snake, and if someone says, 'it is all good to catch it', we don't do so. We stand at a distance because the snake is capable of doing some evil to us. But the truth is, what is evil is also good. Today or tomorrow, they exchange places. This understanding must come as a background. Then handle the world in a particular way. Therefore, Sri Ramakrishna said: 'the divine is in all beings, also in the tiger. That doesn't mean you go and embrace the tiger, because that tiger, in this particular context, can become an evil to you and may also destroy you. But the truth is, the same divine spark is there in the tiger also. So, from a distance you worship the tiger. Another tiger, a small cub, you can take it on your lap, and also play with it. It doesn't harm you. Water is divine; but some water is meant for washing feet, some meant only for bathing and drinking. All water is not good for every usage.' So, these differences are there, behind which there is the unity also. That is what our sages discovered: unity behind the diversities of nature. *Sat asat ca aham arjuna,* 'I am both *sat* and *asat,* O Arjuna'. *Sat* means 'being', *asat* means 'non-being'. I am both. *Sat* also means 'effect',

asat means ‘cause’. In different contexts, these meanings change. What you see is an effect. That is *sat.* And what you cannot see behind this effect is the cause, the *asat;* that you do not see. So we call it *asat* in one context. In the other context, that which is, and that which is not. *Sat* means ‘being’; *asat* means ‘non-being’. I am both. That is the language, because everything is one. Absolute unity behind this world of multiplicity.

Then, the *Gītā* says: those who worship various gods with a view to going to heaven, they are very ordinary type of devotees:

त्रैविद्या मां सोमपाः पूतपापा
यज्ञैरिष्ट्वा स्वर्गतिं प्रार्थयन्ते ।
ते पुण्यमासाद्य सुरेन्द्रलोक-
मश्नन्ति दिव्यान्दिवि देवभोगान् ॥२०॥

Traividyā mām somapāḥ pūtapāpā
yajñaiḥ iṣṭvā svargatim prārthayante;
Te puṇyam āsādya surendralokam
aśnanti divyān divi devabhogān — 9. 20

‘The knowers of the three Vedas, worshipping Me by *yajña,* drinking the *soma,* and (thus) being purified from sin, pray for passage to heaven; reaching the holy world of the Lord of the *devas,* they enjoy in heaven the divine pleasures of the *devas*.’

People, who sacrifice to gods with a view to going to heaven, enjoy the pleasures there for a limited period. A limited cause cannot create an unlimited effect. A limited cause will create a limited effect. So, you may go to heaven, enjoy all the pleasures there, but, later on, you will have to return. The next *śloka* says:

ते तं भुक्त्वा स्वर्गलोकं विशालं
क्षीणे पुण्ये मर्त्यलोकं विशन्ति ।
एवं त्रैधर्म्यमनुप्रपन्ना
गतागतं कामकामा लभन्ते ॥२१॥

Te tam bhuktvā svargalokam viśālam
kṣīṇe puṇye martyalokam viśanti;
Evam trayīdharmam anuprapannā
gatāgatam kāmakāmā labhante — 9. 21

'Having enjoyed the vast *svarga*-world, or heaven, they enter the mortal world, on the exhaustion of their merit; thus, abiding by the injunctions of the three (Vedas), desiring desires, they (constantly) go and return.'

Te tam bhuktvā svargalokam viśālam, 'there, they, having enjoyed the extensive *svargaloka'; viśālam,* 'extensive'; *kṣīṇe puṇye,* 'when all the *puṇya* or merit is exhausted', your capital is exhausted; *martyalokam viśanti*, you have to 'come back again to the same earthly life', taking a new body, struggling again. This is the nature of human life at the level of spiritual ignorance, not knowing the truth. *Evam trayīdharmam anuprapannā,* 'thus those who follow the *dharma* taught in the three Vedas', i.e. the *karma-kāṇḍa* or the ritualistic portion of the Vedas. Such people go on offering sacrifices to this or that god with the attitude only to build up *puṇya* and go to heaven. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has already referred to this in the second chapter, that such people can never get that steadiness of mind which is the fruit of the highest spiritual realization. *Kṣīṇe puṇye,* 'when the *puṇya* is exhausted': *puṇya* is a finite quantity; how many good things can you do? How many sacrifices can you perform to build up a little capital of *puṇyam*? Yes, go there and enjoy. Then, when it is over, you cannot continue there; *martyalokam viśanti,* 'they come back to this *martyaloka* or mortal world'. *Evam trayīdharmam anuprapannā,* 'those who thus follow the *dharma* of the three Vedas'; *trayī, tri,* means 'three' Vedas: *Ṛg Veda, Yajur Veda, Sāma Veda,* these three. Those who depend upon these three Vedas and sacrifices mentioned therein, what happens to them? *Gatāgatam,* 'they keep going and returning all the time', but why? *Kāmakāmā,* because they are 'full of sensory desires', desires after desires: I must enjoy this, I must enjoy that; that is *kāmakāmā. Gatāgatam labhante,* 'constantly they will go and return'. This is not a very happy state of life, say the Upaniṣads. In the Upaniṣads, therefore, they developed *jñāna-kāṇḍa,* 'knowledge portion' dealing with how to understand the truth?, where is that heaven?, and all that. In *you* is the infinite heaven. This infinite you reject, and you desire to go here and there for a little pleasure; that is not correct. So,

heaven became very very much reduced in value in the Upaniṣads; and the *Gītā* also has done so. Make a heaven here by realizing your immortal Atman. And all the *Purāṇas* also said the same thing. The development of *jñāna* and *bhakti* teachings in later times, reduced the importance of this heaven-going-business. You can have it here, be a devotee of the Divine, worship Him, serve people in that spirit, and here itself you can create a heaven. And so, in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* there is mention of the reverse process: Gods in heavens are eager to be born in India as citizens of this country, Bharata, a very holy land. So, in one conference of gods in heaven, they passed one resolution: when we end our life in this heaven, along with the exhaustion of the *puṇya* that has brought us here, with whatever little *puṇyam* remains, let us get birth in this holy land of India. Gods are eager to be born in India, this *puṇya-bhūmi.* This came through the philosophy of *bhakti* and *jñāna.* These great *jñānis* and *bhaktas*, they make this land holy and pure, and so we call it *puṇyabhūmi*. Bharata is a *puṇyabhūmi.* So many sages, so many holy people, have lived here. Every particle of dust is holy here. That interjection developed through the *Purāṇas.* So, the opposite is there. Gods are eager to be born as citizens of India, and some of our people are eager to go to heaven, not knowing that this is better than that! *Gatāgatam kāmakāmā labhante,* 'they get this constant ding dong march up and down because they are full of sensory desires'. This is how the Vedas, towards the end, in the Upaniṣads, very much reduce the value of heaven-going. 'Here itself', *ihaiva, ihaiva,* in this very body, in this very world, you can realize the highest. Why go here and there? Heaven is within you, 'the kingdom of God is within you', said Jesus. The infinite and immortal Atman is your true nature. Try to manifest it. See the same Atman in every being. Make a heaven of your own country. That is what we were taught by the *bhakti* and *jñāna* traditions of India, and that continues even today. The idea of going to heaven has become so little, though some sections of people may still be holding on to that idea. So, Sri Ramakrishna in our time, said: *'there, there' is ignorance; 'here, here' is knowledge*. In Bengali: *'Śekhāne, śekhāne, ajñān; Ekhāne, ekhāne, jñān.' Śekhāne* means 'there'; *ekhāne* means 'here'. Śrī Kṛṣṇa said in the second chapter, *vedavādaratāḥ pārtha nānyadastīti vādinaḥ,* 'those who remain engrossed in the (ritualistic) utterances of the Vedas and declare that nothing else exists', and *bhogaiśvaryaprasaktānām,*

‘those whose minds delight in sensory enjoyment and affluence’, for such people, *vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidhīyate,* ‘they will never get that steady mind, steady intellect, by being established in *samādhi,* in the infinite Atman’. And the Upaniṣads also speak very disparagingly of this running after heaven. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* says: ‘fools only think so’; that is the language used there. Realize the truth here itself, *ihaiva tairjitaḥ sargo, Gītā* said: ‘here itself they have conquered relativity, finitude’, realizing the same Atman in every being. So, this *jñāna* and this *bhakti* are two profound teachings that came later influencing all our religions in India. And now it has got a tremendous strength through Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Here itself make a heaven. Sri Ramakrishna came to establish *Satya yuga* in this world. That is the language. A revolutionary Bengali Muslim poet, late Kazi Nazrul Islam of Bengal, composed two songs on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. In the song on Sri Ramakrishna he mentions *Satya yuger puṇya smṛti kalite ānile tumi tāpas,* ‘Hey *Tapas*! You brought the memory of *Satya yuga* in this *Kali yuga*.’ What a beautiful expression! And about Swami Vivekananda he wrote: *Bhārate ānile tumi nava Ved, mūcchidile jāti dharmer bhed*, ‘you brought to Bharata a new Veda and wiped away the differences based on castes and religions.’ So, great teachers come, purify this earth, and they give us a message so that we can make a heaven here itself by our character transformation. Through developing *bhakti* and *jñāna* we can develop heaven here itself. That is the goal which Vivekananda has placed before all of us in the modern period. Everything is here, here, here. The highest reality is here. Why go far away? This is how the Upaniṣads gave us the profound message of the greatness and uniqueness of the human being. Human beings are greater than gods, greater than angels. In Islam also there is the story: when God created man, he asked all the angels to go and salute him. One angel did not salute. God cursed him and he became the devil. So, the human being’s greatness is emphasized thereby. The very fact that God incarnates in a human frame, also raises the human being to a high pedestal. What a divine personality is a Ramakrishna, a Jesus, a Buddha. But, they are human beings like us and yet something wonderful. So, from now onwards the stress will be on how to make life in this world pure, holy, and oriented towards the divine, towards establishing happy inter-human relationships. That is the purpose of the *Gītā;* intense

practicality of pure religion. Inter-human relationship becomes happy because one sees the spark of the divine everywhere. Love alone can come from the heart then. If all people can love each other, and if high character comes, then the world becomes a heaven. What else is heaven? This is heaven. The other is only a mere pleasure garden, with more and more of pleasure; that is all. There is no development there. In fact, it is emphasized that one does not acquire new *karma* in heaven. Only whatever *karma* you have done, whatever *puṇyam* you have acquired, that only you can enjoy; you cannot accumulate further *puṇyam* there. So, the earth is called *karmabhūmi;* heaven is called *bhogabhūmi.* That is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa said: *gatāgatam kāmakāmā labhante,* 'people full of sensory desires, will experience repeated going and coming'. This is a profound observation of ancient Hindu thought and modern American experience.

In the post World War period, the American Hoover Committee's Report upon recent economic trends in the U.S. contains the following significant confession:

'The survey has proved conclusively what has long been felt theoretically to be true that desires are almost insatiable, that one desire makes way for another. The conclusion is that economically we have a boundless field before us; that there are no new desires which will not make way for newer desires as soon as they are satisfied.'

A human being becomes an utter slave of things. That is called *samsāra.* That is what is very much present in society today. That has to change. Where is our freedom then? We are being taken like a horse or a bull with a nose ring to various places. What is that due to? That is called unrestrained sensory desire for sense objects. That is how modern Western thinking is slowly trying to grasp this glory of the human being, who has something within, attaining which makes one fulfilled, makes one realize one's nature as the Atman, as *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda,* 'Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss'. When you realize the Atman, or get on the road to realize it, these things become utterly childish.

One of the *ślokas* composed by Swami Vivekananda and which devotees recite during Sri Ramakrishna's *ārati* or the evening service has the line: *sampada tava śrīpada bhava goṣpada vāri yathāy;* this is one of

the most profound utterances just like the Upaniṣadic utterances. *Sampada tava śrīpada,* 'when we get the treasure of your holy feet', then what happens to us? *Bhava,* 'the whole *samsāra*', *goṣpada vāri yathāy,* 'becomes like a mud puddle' in value. When you get a place at the feet of the Lord, all the attractions of the world, will be as insignificant as a mud puddle. When a cow passes by a muddy road, the hoof makes a mark on the ground. In that mark you find collected a little water. That is called *goṣpadavāri.* So, Vedanta says, *brahmāṇḍam goṣpadāyate,* 'the whole *Brahmāṇḍa* or universe becomes like a *goṣpada.*' That is the Vedantic teaching. And you can actually see it in the life of people. They have realized the highest, and these things never attract them. These are nothing; they have achieved something very great. How can you compare it with all these things? Like that Christian saint whose rich magistrate friend told another friend of the saint that when he dies he would donate all his money to that Christian saint. Hearing this the friend went and told the saint what the magistrate friend had told him. The saint answered: 'Does he not know that I have already died before he will die!' That is the language. *Brahmāṇḍam goṣpadāyate.* What a wonderful vision it is! How big you become when you are able to say that! These pleasures, power, name, fame are nothing. But at the beginning, we cannot do so. We are after these; no harm. Begin from where you are. But remember, there is that state also. When that is recognized, one can treat these like straw. That is the Vedantic teaching. It doesn't say, do not run after power, pleasure, etc. No. Run after these, but keep your eyes open. A time will come when you will know these are nothing. Something higher will attract you. At that time be ready to respond. Live in the world, but don't get immersed in worldliness. That is the Vedantic warning to every human being.

A reassessment of the whole ritualistic religion took place in the Upaniṣads and there they found that this ritualism and seeking to go to heaven are childish. They took to *jñāna,* the knowledge of the infinite Atman, the divine spark in every one of us, which is the birthright of every one. That is one stream of spiritual development; and very soon came the other stream, *bhakti,* pure love of God—God, the most beautiful person, the divine Person, who is full of auspicious qualities, *ananta-kalyāṇa-guṇa-sampannaḥ,* as Śri Rāmānujācārya has expressed it. Love of that Divine is

love of the same infinite Brahman, but in its *saguṇa* or personal aspect. And therefore, *bhakti* became centred in the *saguṇa* aspect of the *saguṇa-nirguṇa* Reality. So, both these strands of spiritual development, *jñāna* and *bhakti*, helped to devalue not only the heaven concept but even the importance of too many rituals. This *bhakti* religion liberalised the whole concept of spiritual life, opening the door to salvation to everyone.

Such is the evaluation of this heaven-going concept and practice by the philosophy of the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā.* Therefore, the next verse, verse 22, considered to be a very remarkable verse in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, says that *the highest type of bhakti can be had here and now, in this very life*. A devotee begins with a good deal of self, ego, and yet he is a devotee. But, as he advances in spiritual life, the ego becomes thinner and thinner. Ultimately, the ego vanishes. 'Not I, but thou.' 'Thy will be done', as the New Testament puts it. That is the last stage of a devotee's life. Everything is the Lord's. I am nothing. The ego has vanished and the Lord fills the heart of such a devotee. At that stage something great happens to the devotee. We work for ourselves, we earn money, we look after our own interests, we take care of our bank accounts, we have to do all these and many more, because we have still the sense of ego. But a time will come when this genetically-controlled ego will vanish and the heart will be filled with the Divine. Then the Lord does everything for you. You have nothing to do for yourself. But that is a very high state of spiritual realization. The world's mystics—Hindu, Christian, Muslim—all have shown that high development in some people or the other. But very few can reach that highest level. That level is being expounded in verse 22:

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥२२॥

Ananyāścintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate;
Teṣām nityābhiyuktānām yogakṣemam vahāmyaham — 9. 22

'Persons who, meditating on Me as non-separate, worship Me through everything they do, to them, who are thus ever zealously established in *yoga*, I provide what they lack and preserve what they already have.'

A very rare statement! A similar statement you get in the *Śānti Parva* of the *Mahābhārata* also from Bhīṣma. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *ananyāścintayanto mām,* 'those who think of Me and nothing else'; that means, exclusively, one-pointedly devoted to the Divine, that type of people. They are *ananyāḥ; anya* means 'another', somebody else; *ananyāḥ,* 'there is nobody else'. 'The Lord alone is my everything'—such people. *Ye janāḥ paryupāsate,* 'those who worship Me with that attitude', with that one-pointed mind; *teṣām,* 'to them'; *nityābhiyuktānām,* 'who are *nitya abhiyuktāḥ,* constantly in a spirit of *yoga*'; the Lord alone is, my self has gone away; only the Lord is present within me. *Yogakṣemam vahāmyaham,* 'I protect what they have and I supply what they need,' I look after their needs, their wants, etc. I do this for them. The Lord becomes the servant of the devotee. Devotee has nothing to worry about.

This is the state of the highest type of *bhakti.* There have been, as I said, *bhaktas,* devotees, in every religion, who had risen to this high level of complete self-surrender. In the end of the *Gītā,* in the eighteenth chapter, this will be the supreme closing song: complete surrender to the divine. At present it refers only to a few people. But it will be everybody's possibility when we become sufficiently mature in spiritual life. So, the sixty sixth verse of the last chapter of the *Gītā*—we call it *carama śloka,* 'the final message'—refers to this idea of complete self-surrender. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, when a five year old child is invited for dinner, it has not to worry at all; he or she is taken care of, given a particular seat, given food, and he or she is fed. He or she has nothing to do by oneself. Similarly, when you become a spiritual child, where the ego has completely disappeared, the Lord Himself does what is good for you, protects what is with you already. That is this great *śloka.* Many Indian saints have commented upon this particular verse. *Yogakṣemam vahāmyaham,* 'I carry *yogakṣema* to such people'. *Yogakṣema* are two meaningful words: *yoga* means, 'to get what you need and have not got'; and *kṣema,* 'to protect what you have'. So, *yogakṣema* is a wonderful word in Sanskrit. 'I look after the *yogakṣema* of such people.' The Lord becomes the servant of the devotee. The Lord has said this at several places. I am the servant of nobody, but I am the servant of the devotee. That is the statement of Lord Viṣṇu and Śrī Kṛṣṇa also. So, this is a great idea.

We have, in modern times, only one instance where this truth becomes very very prominently manifested. That is in Swami Vivekananda's life. Those who have read his biography by the Eastern and Western disciples will have come across this: He was travelling in the Uttar Pradesh area, with the hot sun scorching above, without a pie in his pocket, a wandering monk whom somebody had put in a first class compartment. He had nothing else with him and he became thirsty and hungry. When the train halted, he got down. There was also somebody else travelling in the same compartment—a rich man. He made fun of Vivekananda: 'you did not care to earn money and therefore you suffer'. When Swamiji got down, the rich man also got down and sat on a bench in the railway platform which was a covered area. Swamiji could not sit there because he was very ordinarily dressed. So, he sat outside under a tree, hungry. Then took place a wonderful event. From a distance, a man came onto the platform. Pointing to Swamiji with the finger, he said: 'Babaji, babaji, I have brought food for you.' He came closer and closer. Then Swamiji thought that he had made a mistake. So, he told him: 'I don't know you. You must have made a mistake. You must have meant to meet somebody else.' 'No, no, no', replied the man, 'I mean you. I am a sweetmeat seller here. I am a devotee of Śrī Rāma. I was taking my afternoon rest after my worship and lunch. Śrī Rāma came to me in a dream and said, "My devotee is in distress. You go and serve him." First, I slept without caring. I didn't listen to that dream instruction. But again I was pushed. "Go soon, go soon." Then I immediately got up, prepared sweets and *luchis* and all that, took water, and then came to the platform. And from a distance I could identify you. You have been shown to me in the dream. So, please take these.' Swami Vivekananda was touched by this experience and, with tears in his eyes, he took the food and blessed him. Swamiji himself narrated this story later on.

येऽप्यन्यदेवताभक्ता यजन्ते श्रद्धयाऽन्विताः ।
तेऽपि मामेव कौन्तेय यजन्त्यविधिपूर्वकम् ॥२३॥

Ye'pi anyadevatā bhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ;
Te'pi māmeva kaunteya yajanti avidhipūrvakam — 9. 23

‘Even those devotees, who endued with *śraddhā,* worship other gods, they too worship Me alone, O son of Kuntī, (but) by the wrong method.’

Ye’pi anyadevatā bhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ, if there are some ‘people who worship with faith other gods and goddesses’, so many divinities which we have; *te’pi māmeva kaunteya yajanti avidhipūrvakam*, ‘even they are actually worshipping Me, but not in the correct form, not in the proper way’. *Avidhipūrvakam,* ‘not according to *vidhi.*’ *Anyadevatā bhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ,* that faith is there but they do not know that there is only One infinite Divine, they don’t know that truth, so ‘they worship individual deities here and there’. But all that worship eventually comes to Me only. But they are doing it not understanding the truth.

अहं हि सर्वयज्ञानां भोक्ता च प्रभुरेव च ।
न तु मामभिजानन्ति तत्त्वेनातश्च्यवन्ति ते ॥२४॥

Aham hi sarvayajñānām bhoktā ca prabhureva ca;
Na tu mām abhijānanti tattvena ataścyavanti te — 9. 24

‘For, I alone am the Enjoyer, and Lord of all *yajñas;* but, because they do not know Me in reality, they return (to the mortal world).’

Aham hi sarvayajñānām bhoktā ca prabhureva ca, ‘I am the one enjoyer and master of all worship, of all ritual, of all sacrifice and worship.’ I am the centre of all this. There is only one infinite Divine to which all this worship will go. Some do not know that truth. Therefore, they are carried away by a deity here or a deity there. *Na tu mām abhijānanti,* ‘this truth’, that there is the One Divine, Myself, behind all these deities and divinities, etc., ‘these people do not know’; *tattvena ataḥ cyavanti te,* and ‘therefore, they fall down from the *tattva.*’ What is the *tattva?* There is only one infinite Divine behind all these various divinities. Over four thousand years ago, the *Ṛg Veda* had proclaimed this Truth: *Ekam sat, viprā bahudhā vadanti,* ‘Truth is one; sages call it by various names.’ That they forgot, and invented hundreds of gods and goddesses, and ran after this god or that god. And therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said in the previous verse: *avidhipūrvakam,* ‘they are doing that kind of worship not according to *vidhi* or teaching of the

Vedas. Even if I worship a particular divinity, I must have the conviction that this is only an expression of that supremely Divine Person.

यान्ति देवव्रता देवान् पित ृन्यान्ति पितृव्रता: ।
भूतानि यान्ति भूतेज्या यान्ति मद्याजिनोऽपि माम् ॥२५॥

Yānti devavratā devān pitçnyānti pitṛvratāḥ;
Bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā yānti madyājino'pi mām — 9. 25

'Votaries of the *devas* go to the *devas;* to the *Pitṛs* go their votaries; to the *bhūtas* go the *bhūta* worshippers; and, My votaries too come unto Me.'

Yānti devavratāḥ devān, 'those who are devoted to the *devas,* they go to the *devas.'* Similarly, *pitçn yānti pitṛvratāḥ,* 'people who are devoted to ancestors, to spirits, they go to them.' Similarly, *bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyāḥ,* 'those who worship the various *bhūtagaṇas*, they will go to those *bhūtagaṇas.*' And many others you find in Saṅkarācārya's commentary. Their worshippers go to them. *Yānti mat yājinaḥ api mām,* 'but those who worship Me, come unto Me.' The one infinite Self in all beings is speaking, 'those who worship Me, they come unto Me.' Whatever *śraddhā* we have in whatever form of the divine, we will get it. But, the result will be poorer and poorer. If you concentrate on the highest, then naturally, the result will also be the highest. Worship of that one Divine, the Infinite, the Immortal Divine Personality, is simple. Worship of gods and other powers is extremely complicated, costly and difficult to perform. But, in many cases you will find, where there is pure *bhakti,* you don't have to spend much money for worship. But, to please these gods and goddesses, you need lot of money, lots of priests are needed. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that the worship of this Divine Reality, the Divine Person, who is in the heart of all, is extremely simple; nothing can be simpler than that. That is the theme of the next verse.

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।
तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मन: ॥२६॥

Patram puṣpam phalam toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati;
Tadaham bhakti upahṛtam aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ —9. 26

‘Whoever with devotion offers Me a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, that I accept—the devout gift of the pure-minded.’

The difference between little divine powers here and there and the one infinite Divine is this: the latter one is full of love; the other ones may sometimes love, and at other times they may be motivated by dislike also. You may displease a particular divinity, and therefore, you get contrary result. Your mind also begins to worry you. Have I done correctly? But in the case of this one Divine, who is all love, there is no question of contrary result. He is all love. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa puts it in a verse which is so often recited all over India. *Patram,* while worshipping just give a *tulasi* ‘leaf’; *puṣpam,* just ‘a flower’; *phalam,* a small ‘fruit’; *toyam,* a glass of ‘water’; *bhaktyā prayacchati,* ‘those who give Me any one of these with devotion’; I see that devotion only. I don’t see the quantity of offering. This offering, *bhaktyupahṛtam,* ‘given out of devotion’; *tadaham aśnāmi,* ‘I eat it, I consume it’, because the devotee has given it who is *prayatātmanaḥ,* ‘one with a pure heart full of love’, full of satisfaction. This is the devotion I like to see, not the quantity of offering. But, whatever is given with pure love has infinite value.

The path of *Bhakti* therefore, reduces ritual, reduces expenditure, reduces show. That is the greatness of *bhakti.* And it brings you closest to the Divine. This verse is the maximum expression of that type of devotion. *Prayatātmanaḥ,* ‘of a pure-minded devotee’. A sincere devotee does not have to offer many things to the Divine. When you are very intimate with somebody, you need not give any kind of formal offering or gift to that person, because your heart is one with his or her heart. Similarly, a devotee, who is one with the Divine, has not to perform formal worship in any big or costly way. He or she has already overcome that need. So, he or she uses the simplest worship, the material used is so very little, money spent is so little, but behind all this there is the immense pure love of the Divine, and the Divine sees that pure love in the heart, not the bigness of the offering in your hand. This is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa wants to convey to all devotees. Therefore, He further says:

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥२७॥

Yatkaroṣi yadaśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat;
Yattapasyasi kaunteya tatkuruṣva madarpaṇam — 9. 27

'Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away, whatever austerity you practice, O son of Kuntī, do that as an offering unto Me.'

That is a very beautiful exhortation. In two or three places in the *Gītā,* similar exhortations come. *Yat karoṣi,* 'whatever you do', any action you do; *yad aśnāsi,* 'whatever you consume by way of food'; *yat juhoṣi,* 'whatever you offer as a sacrifice'; *dadāsi yat,* 'whatever you give as *dāna,* charity or offering'; *yat tapasyasi,* 'whatever *tapas* or austerity you perform'; *tat kuruṣva,* 'do all these'; *kaunteya*, 'O Arjuna'; *mad arpaṇam,* 'as an offering unto Me'. That is how the whole of life becomes a worship of the Divine. Your actions, your human relations, all the worship that you do, everything becomes an offering to the Divine. That is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's blessed guidance to the devotees. He will give it in a stronger language in the last verse of the eleventh chapter where this message will be conveyed, and Śaṅkarācārya will say, commenting on it, that here you have the essence of the spiritual message of the *Gītā.* Here, in the present verse also, it is similar. What is the need for all types of showy religion and worship? True religion and worship is such a simple thing in which the whole of life can become a dedication to the Divine. We can live in Him. He will live in us. This is what we can do. There you have *pure* spirituality. This is a wonderful development. When people understand the nature of *bhakti,* more and more of such people will appear in our society, reducing the current noisy, showy, costly worship. The whole of life becomes religion, as Vivekananda said, as quoted by Sister Nivedita in her Introduction to the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda:* 'Life itself is religion'.

शुभाशुभफलैरेवं मोक्ष्यसे कर्मबन्धनैः ।
संन्यासयोगयुक्तात्मा विमुक्तो मामुपैष्यसि ॥२८॥

Śubhāśubha phalairevam mokṣyase karmabandhanaiḥ;
Sannyāsayoga yuktātmā vimukto mām upaiṣyasi — 9. 28

’Thus, freed from the bondage of actions bearing good and evil results, with the heart steadfast in the *yoga* of renunciation, and liberated, you shall come unto Me.’

When you become liberated by following this kind of spiritual practice, ‘You will attain to Me’. How? *Sannyāsa yoga yuktātmā,* ‘one who is practising the *yoga* of *sannyāsa,* complete renunciation’. And therefore, the whole life becomes divinized; eating, drinking, human relationships, everything becomes divinized. That is the real *sannyāsa yoga* in the path of *bhakti. Śubhāśubha phalairevam mokṣyase karma bandhanaiḥ,* ‘by this you become freed from the bondage of *karma* based on pure and impure results’. What kind of bondage? *Śubha, aśubha,* sometimes ‘good’, sometimes ‘bad’. Just living in the house, living in society, and yet you become *sannyāsa yoga yuktātmā,* because one offers all one’s work to the Divine. *Vimukto mām upaiṣyasi,* ‘such a devotee becomes freed and comes unto Me’.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the next verse:

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः ।
ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ॥२९॥

Samo’ham sarva bhūteṣu na me dveṣyo’sti na priyaḥ;
Ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā mayi te teṣu cāpyaham — 9 .29

‘I am the same in all beings; to Me there is none hateful or dear. But those who worship Me with devotion are in Me, and I too am in them.’

‘I am equal to all beings’, *samo’ham,* there is no partiality in the Divine. This is a very important point. You can ask that question: Has He someone special?, some favourite? He sees no such differences. *Na me dveṣyo’sti na priyaḥ,* ‘I have no enemy and no friend’. I am equal to all. Just like the sun which shines equally on the sinners and the saints, the good and the bad, on all. So also is the Divine. But what is the difference then? *Ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā mayi te, teṣu cāpyaham,* ‘those who worship Me with devotion, they are in Me and I too am in them’. They have come close to Me on their own. They get the benefit of My presence more than anyone else. And Śaṅkarācārya gives a beautiful illustration. In winter season, we

light a fire to warm ourselves. Now, if you sit near the fire, you get the blessing of the fire; if you sit far away, you won't get that blessing of the fire. Fire has done no harm to you nor any good to that person sitting near by. Fire is impartial in every way. But, it is for you to go and sit near the fire. Then you will get all the blessings of that fire. Similarly, these devotees who have got this blessing, they have got it because 'they are in Me', *mayi te,* and also 'I am in them', *teṣu cāpyaham.* Therefore, it is for us to approach the Divine and get the benefit of that great Reality that is in you, in me, in all people. But the truth is *samo'ham sarva bhūteṣu,* 'I am equal in all beings'. It is the same case with the sun also. Everyone will get the blessing of the Divine. Even the worst human being will get this blessing. This *bhakti* message goes to everyone: sinners, saints, ordinary devotees, and very pure devotees. So, in the next *śloka* you find this wonderful statement:

अपि चेत् सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥३०॥

Api cet sudurācāro bhajate mām ananyabhāk;
Sādhureva sa mantavyaḥ samyak vyavasito hi saḥ — 9. 30

'If even a very wicked person worships Me, with one-pointed devotion, he or she should be regarded as good, for he or she has very rightly resolved.'

Even if 'a person is extremely wicked', *sudurācāraḥ; durācāraḥ* means 'wickedness'; *sudurācāraḥ,* 'perpetrator of extremely wicked deeds'; even then, *bhajate mām ananyabhāk,* 'if such a person worships Me with one-pointed devotion'; *sādhureva sa mantavyaḥ,* 'then he or she must be considered a *sādhu* only', he or she must be considered as good; *samyak vyavasito hi saḥ,* 'because he or she has resolved rightly'. That person has decided to go closer to the Divine. Though that person was wicked, such a one is trying to be different hereafter. *Api cet sudurācāraḥ,* 'even if the person is extremely wicked', God is the purifier of everyone. The most sinful, the most wicked, all will be saved by the love of the Divine. And many cases have been reported in our spiritual literature of how great sinners became saints by a touch of the Divine. That is the beauty of *bhakti.*

Very often a sinner becomes saintly, but society doesn't recognize it. Society will continue to hunt that sinner, because society sees only that sinner; it does not see that change inside. That is the theme in that famous French book by Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables,* a beautiful story of Jean Val Jean, a thief who stole from a Bishop's house many golden and silver items. He was being chased by the police. When he returned everything, the Bishop had no anger against him. The Bishop blessed him saying, it is yours, you take it. But the police took him to be a criminal. The Bishop had forgiven him. And the rest of his life was a play of this misunderstanding that he had become changed by the touch of the Bishop but the police did not recognize it; society did not recognize it. So, Jean Val Jean goes on constantly being shadowed by the police. Inspector Javert, one character, comes there. Very interesting story is the *Les miserables*. So, here also, the truth is very strongly put: *sādhureva sa mantavyaḥ,* 'he or she must be considered as a *sādhu* only'; *samyak vyavasito hi saḥ,* 'his or her mind has been well resolved to be good'. The mind has been yoked to the Divine. The past is finished, left behind. Now a new life has started. That is the great power of *bhakti,* love of God.

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥३१॥

Kṣipram bhavati dharmātmā śaśvat śāntim nigacchati;
Kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati — 9. 31

'Soon does he or she become righteous, and attain eternal peace, O son of Kuntī; boldly can you proclaim that My devotee will never be destroyed.'

A profound promise of Śrī Kṛṣṇa you get in this verse. *Kṣipram,* 'very soon', *bhavati dharmātmā,* that person 'will become a *dharmātmā*, an ethical, moral person'; *śaśvat śāntim nigacchati,* 'very soon he or she will get supreme peace of mind'. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa turns to Arjuna and says: *Kaunteya pratijānīhi,* 'Arjuna, make this promise to everyone': *na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati,* 'My devotee will not perish'. You can take it for granted; it is the truth. Proclaim it from the housetops. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling to Arjuna and to all else: *Kaunteya pratijānīhi*. In spite of

being a criminal, in spite of doing so many bad things, devotion to the Divine has brought a big change in the person, and that change is a thorough change, not piecemeal. But it takes a little time for people to understand. A very puritan society will judge the weaknesses of men and women with great harshness, but a *bhakti*-oriented society will never do so. Members of that society will have sympathy. Who knows, tomorrow he or she may change. In the New Testament, you will find the story of the condemnation of a sinner only by other sinners. Saintly people never condemn sinners. That is the language. In the story of Jesus, you will find this. 'Where are your accusers?', he asked a woman taken in adultery. 'They have gone away, Sir,' she replied. 'They didn't find any fault with you?', Jesus asked. She said, 'No, they did not, because you told them: "he who had not done any sin, let him cast the first stone."' Hearing this, one by one all melted away. Then, Jesus said: 'So, they have left you? I also say, "I leave you. You are free. You can go. Go and sin no more."' That is the language. So, how does a holy mind view human failings and weaknesses? With tremendous compassion, not in a harsh way. Generally, in all these orthodox societies, there is too much of that harsh judgement. Our own society is full of such harsh judgement. That is the type of a prudish society. But, where there is real *bhakti,* there will never be that kind of harsh judgement. Today's sinner can become tomorrow's saint. As Dr. S. Radhakrishnan used to say, behind every saint there was a sinner and in front of every sinner there is a saint. So, let us not forget that these are all changeable, nothing is fixed, as it were. This we should constantly remember.

In Karachi in Pakistan, I saw a sentence written on the table of a newspaper editor: 'there is so much good in the worst of us and so much bad in the best of us that it ill behoves any of us to speak ill of the rest of us.' That impressed me. A society which doesn't judge human weakness very harshly is a healthy society. Weakness is there; it will come. But, show sympathy, that is what the world needs. The world needs sympathy, not harsh judgement. That is possible in a society where *bhakti* is current coin. Today or tomorrow, people can become devotees of God. They will never judge harshly any human weakness. They will make people aware that there are people here to help you. What a beautiful idea! Not throwing a man or

woman down because he or she has some weakness. The whole society tells you, we are here to help you. That is the healthy society. We never had it for several centuries. Extremely harsh has been our society. That has to change. When pure religion will come, that change will come. That humanist feeling will come. Human response to human situations will come. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'My devotee will not perish.'

Girish Chandra Ghosh was a drunkard and a great dramatist; and he had confessed all the evils of the world he had done. But Sri Ramakrishna loved him immensely. In spite of all these, he could see genius and goodness in that person, and had infinite faith in Girish Chandra Ghosh. Girish himself did not have so much faith in himself, as Sri Ramakrishna had in him! And eventually, Girish became a saint. And he said, 'This is the miracle of Sri Ramakrishna. He never asked me to give up this or that evil. He stimulated the positive element in me and I have become completely transformed.' That is the story of Girish Chandra Ghosh. Even girls, acting in Girish Ghosh's theatre in those days, were all treated as low-class women. There also Sri Ramakrishna blessed the good actresses. Slowly, their lives changed and, later on, one of them wrote a book on how her life was changed by the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna. So, this is an incident of our own times. We have plenty of such stories coming to us from olden days in our *Purāṇas*. It is good for us to know this truth conveyed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa: *Kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati.* The next verse says:

मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य येऽपि स्युः पापयोनयः ।
स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम् ॥३२॥

Mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye'pi syuḥ pāpa yonayaḥ;
Striyo vaiśyāstathā śūdrāḥ te'pi yānti parām gatim — 9. 32

'For, taking refuge in Me, they also, O son of Pṛthā, who might be of inferior birth, as well as women, *vaiśyas,* as well as *śūdras*—even they attain to the supreme Goal.'

This particular verse has been translated differently by different scholars. *Mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya,* 'truly those who take refuge in Me', let them be anybody; *pāpayonayaḥ,* 'those who are of sinful birth', let them

be people of such types; or *striyaḥ vaiśyāḥ tathā śūdrāḥ,* ‘women, *vaiśyas,* as well as *śūdras*’, let them be any one of these; *te api yānti parām gatim,* ‘they also go to the highest Goal’ when they take refuge in Me. The main stress is: those whom society has neglected, whom society has condemned, My *bhakti* is there to lift them up, *every one of them.* That is the main theme. But, in our traditional interpretation, the word *pāpayonayaḥ* means ‘those who are born of sin’. According to orthodoxy, women and *śūdras* are all born of sin. That was the medieval concept. Women, even *brāhmaṇa* women, are also thus born of sin! But nowhere in the *Mahābhārata* will you find that kind of statement. Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s teaching, the teaching of the Upaniṣads also is that, all are capable of being redeemed; nobody is just born in sin. The Upaniṣads proclaim all human beings, Indian or foreign, as *amṛtasya putrāḥ,* ‘children of Immortality’, as re-proclaimed by Swami Vivekananda in his address at the 1893 Chicago Parliament of Religions. You can call some *pāpayonis* because they did some crime. But, even they will be saved. And the other three are separated from this *pāpayoni* category. *Striyaḥ vaiśyāḥ tathā śūdrāḥ,* ‘women, *vaiśyas,* as well as *śūdras*’; *te api yānti parām gatim,* ‘they also attain to the highest spiritual level.’ That is the greatness of the *bhakti* centred in Me, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa here. The idea of *pāpa yoni,* ‘born in sin’, has been with us for several centuries in our *Smṛtis.* As I said, even our women were treated as *pāpa yoni*. That is the old medieval idea. The whole thing has been cast away today. Absolutely without any Vedantic basis, this evil belief was there. We have now thrown away that belief, we have gone back to the Upaniṣads. The same Atman is in every being; who then can be a *pāpa yoni?* So, a few centuries of social stagnation and social contraction of heart and mind have condemned many sections of people. That chapter is now finished. It has no more any place in our society, nor in the global society. The Negroes were treated as *pāpa yonis* by the Americans. Today, nobody will do so. Individuals here and there may still do it. But the whole tendency today is to see man and woman in their own real light. The same humanity is there in every human being. From every section, the highest development can come. That is the language which the world understands today and that is what was very much strengthened by Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda in our time. Each soul is potentially divine. That divinity can be manifested in any human being. That is the true

meaning of human life and religion. So, *mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya,* 'those who take refuge in Me, O Arjuna,' let them be all *pāpa yonis,* let them be women, let them be *vaiśyas* or *śūdras,* let them be anybody, they will all achieve the highest goal. The stress is not on *pāpa yoni,* the stress is on: whatever may be the priestly judgement of a section of people, when they come to *bhakti,* all of them will be raised to the highest level. That is the beautiful idea in this particular section. *Bhakti* doesn't make any distinction between caste, creed, sex, etc. In the last chapter of the *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras,* you find that *sūtra* which says that *bhakti* doesn't discriminate between men, women, high class, low class, etc. Why? The next *sūtra* (*sūtra* 73) gives the answer *yataḥ tadīyāḥ,* 'because they all belong to Him'. That is the wonderful language. Everyone belongs to the Divine. How can you condemn one or two or some of the groups? Never! *Yataḥ tadīyā.* 'They all belong to Him'. Everybody is a child of the Divine, children of Immortality, as I referred to earlier as what the Upaniṣad said, *amṛtasya putrāḥ.* Everyone of us is a child of immortality. *Śṛṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrāḥ.* That is the great gospel or good news given by the Upaniṣads. So, based on that, this *bhakti* and this *jñāna* of Vedanta are there to redeem humanity, not to push people down. So, all of them attain the *parām gatim,* 'the supreme state'. What to talk of *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas*. That is the theme of the next verse. They have all this capacity. If only they turn to the Divine, practise *bhakti,* how much more quickly will they get it! They have got a cultural asset already with them which others have to struggle hard to get. If even these others can achieve, then why not these upper level people, and that too much more easily?

किं पुनर्ब्राह्मणा: पुण्या भक्ता राजर्षयस्तथा ।
अनित्यमसुखं लोकमिमं प्राप्य भजस्व माम् ॥३३॥

Kim punaḥ brāhmaṇāḥ puṇyā bhaktā rājarṣayastathā;
Anityam asukham lokam imam prāpya bhajasva mām—9. 33

'What need to mention holy *brāhmaṇas*, and devoted *rājarṣis!* Having obtained this transient, joyless world, you worship Me.'

Holy devoted *brāhmaṇas* or *rājarṣis*, 'sage-like *rājas* or *kṣatriyas*'; *lokam imam prāpya,* 'having come to this world' which is *anityam,*

‘impermanent’ and *asukham,* ‘joyless’, if they worship Me, what doubt is there? They will also attain to the highest level. The concept of *rājarṣi* has been more fully expounded in chapter 4 of volume 1 of this book.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa first referred to the neglected section, and then referred to the pampered section in society. And therefore, He says in the last verse of this chapter:

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि युक्त्वैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः ॥३४॥

Manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī mām namaskuru;
Mām eva eṣyasi yuktvaivam ātmānam matparāyaṇaḥ—9. 34

‘Fill thy mind with Me, be My devotee, sacrifice unto Me, bow down to Me; thus having made your heart steadfast in Me, taking Me as the supreme Goal, you shall come to Me.’

Manmanā bhava, ‘let your mind be fixed on Me’; *madbhakto,* ‘be My devotee’; *madyājī,* ‘whatever ceremonies, rituals and sacrifices you do, do it to Me’; *mām namaskuru,* ‘salute Me’, all your salutations and adorations must be directed to the Divine Person. *Mām eva eṣyasi yuktvā evam,* ‘by this type of *yoga,* you will reach Me only’; *matparāyaṇaḥ,* ‘those who are fully devoted to Me’. This is the great exhortation in this chapter. As I said, this type of exhortation will come again once or twice in other areas also. *Mat parāyaṇaḥ; parāyaṇaḥ* means ‘supreme goal’; when preceded by *mat* it means, ‘Me as the supreme Goal’. In a Bengali song they say, *Tomāke koriyāchi jīvaner dhruvatārā,* which Sri Ramakrishna used to sing: ‘I have made Thee alone the Pole-star of my life.’

When you have a little water in the river, you have to take the water out with great difficulty; and when the water overflows the banks, wherever you want you can get water. Here it is a flood of *bhakti.* This is what must come to humanity in course of time when it understands the spiritual nature of human life which finds expression in love of God, love of human beings, more of compassion and the spirit of service; these are the fruits of that pure type of *bhakti.*

I have a deep feeling that, in this modern period within the next two-three centuries, people will understand this profound philosophy of Vedanta combining *bhakti* and *jñāna,* and which will find expression in every religion in the form of love and service of the people. Take for example, the Sufi woman saint Rābia of the eighth-ninth century AD. What did she do? 'Rābia, do you love God?', somebody asked her. Rābia said, 'yes, I love God, with a tremendous love, I love God.' Then she was asked, 'Rābia, do you hate the devil?' 'Love of God doesn't give me time to hate the devil!', she said. That type of mind will come more and more. Rābia was a great inspiration for all the Sufi saints thereafter. Eight hundred AD is very early. Later Sufis all got inspiration from this slave woman. She was a slave girl and became so high in spiritual dimension. In every religion you will find such examples. My feeling is: when people understand this truth, they will conduct their life and their activity surcharged with that devotion, full of love of God flowing out as love and service of the human beings. There will be a great sense of joy. This kind of *bhakti* will spread in society in course of time when we understand pure religion, as pure spiritual growth. For that, plenty of sources are there, like *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* where religion is expressed in a very simple form. When that *bhakti* will come, a big revolution will take place in human affairs, and I fully believe that such changes will come in India and the rest of the world also. In foreign countries also, I have seen that people are hungry for this kind of bread of pure spirituality, not the stones of dogmas and creeds. So, when they get this, then they also will turn in that direction. Then the promise in that great book, *Padma Purāṇa,* dealing with *Bhāgavata Māhātmyam,* 'the glory of the book *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*', expressed there, will be implemented:

Jñāna-vairāgya-yuktā yā bhaktiḥ premarasāvahā;
Prati geham prati janam tataḥ krīḍām kariṣyati —

This is a prophetic utterance. 'This great *bhakti* strengthened by *jñāna* and *vairāgya*', *Jñāna-vairāgya-yuktā yā bhaktiḥ;* what is the nature of this *bhakti? Prema rasāvahā,* 'flow of *prema rasa,* pure love', that is the nature of this *bhakti*. Eventually, *krīḍām kariṣyati,* this *bhakti* 'will have its play'; *prati geham,* 'in every home'; *prati janam,* and 'in every heart' in this world. Today there is every possibility of humanity trying to *understand* this idea of religion, and in *living it.* It is the most practical. It is meant for

everyone. That is why in the beginning of this chapter we studied the second verse, on which I spent a whole day:

Rāja vidyā rāja guhyam pavitram idam uttamam;
Pratyakṣāvagamam dharmyam susukham kartum avyayam —

Rāja vidyā, 'this is *rājavidyā,* king of sciences'; *rājaguhyam,* 'king of all mysteries'; *pavitram idam uttamam,* 'extremely purifying is this message'. How much of character change will come through this kind of *bhakti*! Purity, devotion, spirit of service, dedication, all these will come. *Pratyakṣāvagamam,* 'can be realized in day-to-day life', not in some far away forest retreat or in some heaven. You can have this experience while cooking in the kitchen, or working in a factory or office. *Dharmyam,* 'strengthens the fabric of society'; integration of the human being with other human beings in society will be strengthened. *Susukham kartum,* 'easy and happy to do', so simple it is. But, *phalam avyayam,* 'the fruit is infinite'. That is what you heard in the second verse in the beginning of this chapter. And we end this chapter with the special exhortation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the last verse.

Dealing with human problems in the world after the Second World War, the agnostic, late Bertrand Russell pleaded for love in the human heart, and with an apology, said Christian love—though he was an anti-Christian all through and knew no other religion—as a solution to solve these problems (*The Impact of Science on Society,* Chapter 6: 'Science and Values', p. 105):

'The root of the matter is a very simple and old fashioned thing, a thing so simple that I am almost ashamed to mention it, for fear of the derisive smile with which wise cynics will greet my words. The thing I mean—please forgive me for mentioning it—is love, Christian love or compassion. If you feel this, you have a motive for existence, a guide in action, a reason for courage, an imperative necessity for intellectual honesty. If you feel this, you have all that anybody should need in the way of religion. …'

The science and technique of religion is really simple; we make it complicated. That should change. The greatest truths are simple. That kind of change will come in the human mind. I have every hope that, in this modern period, a tremendous revolution will take place all over the world,

for I am seeing everywhere great spiritual hunger. Hungry to know what is this, what is that. What is higher life? It will take a little time for people to remove the antiquated dogmas and to understand all this, and it will slowly manifest in their life. That is why this chapter has got special significance for that one single expression, *pratyakṣa avagamam,* not 'there, there', but 'here, here'; here itself, where I am, I can be spiritual. I need not go here and there. The Lord is your own infinite Self. He is all love, all bliss. That is how we can deal with this great subject of science of religion, science of spirituality, in the light of *Bhagavad Gītā. Śrī Kṛṣṇa* is a universal teacher. That is the significance of this three-volume book bearing the title of *Universal Message of the Bhagavad Gītā.*

इति राजविद्या-राजगुह्य-योगो नाम नवमोऽध्यायः ।

Iti rājavidyā-rājaguhya-yogo nāma navamo'dhyāyaḥ —

Thus ends the ninth chapter called The Way of the Kingly Knowledge and the Kingly Secret.

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 10

Vibhūti-Yoga
Glimpses of the Divine Glory

The word *vibhūti* is used to describe the tenth chapter; *vibhūti yoga. Vibhūti* means 'power of manifestation', God in the manifested state. He is unmanifested, He is also manifested. Both are aspects of the Divine—the Impersonal and the Personal. They are one and the same, but two different approaches, as Sri Ramakrishna would say: 'A snake coiled up is that Impersonal state; the same snake, when it starts moving, is the Personal aspect of the Divine.' They are not two, but one. And because of this we can live and work in the world and yet attain spiritual realization. That is the philosophy developed in the ninth chapter. In fact, throughout the *Gītā,* that is the basic philosophy, though this idea comes only a little in the beginning, and a little reference to it in the twelfth chapter. The transcendental, beyond the sensory level, the Unmanifest, that path is also mentioned; but the main stress is on the path to God through the world of manifestation.

God is the Pole star of our life. He is manifested in this universe. We are never away from Him at any time. Only if we can see clearly, we can see Him *in* everything here. In some of the highest poetry of world's literature, this idea is expressed again and again. Even in purely nature poet's poetry you find, as William Wordsworth says in 'Tintern Abbey',

> …I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and to subdue. And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Purely through nature poetry, you get this wonderful idea, this type of a vision, and William Wordsworth also speaks about a state in which 'we are laid asleep in body, and become a living soul'. When Swami Vivekananda was a student in Calcutta, the English Professor Hastie was teaching Wordsworth. There he referred to this experience of *samādhi* described by Wordsworth. And the professor said, 'This is a high state of mind. Very few achieve it. I know only one who has achieved it; that is Ramakrishna of Dakshineswar.' That is a reference Vivekananda, then known as Narendra, heard for the first time about Sri Ramakrishna (*Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern & Western Disciples*, Vol. 1, pp. 47-48). That is the basis of *bhakti* in every religion. Christian *bhakti,* Hindu *bhakti,* Sufi *bhakti,* and Buddhist *bhakti*—in all these you will find this teaching of a profound Divine experience. That possibility is what gives meaning to human life.

So, coming now to the tenth chapter, we get this description of the world of manifestation; that One Divine has become the many. How has He become the many? Through His *yoga* power. He has got a wonderful power that, though He is one, He can also be the many—that is the language that will be used hereafter. So, it is called *vibhūti yoga,* 'the *yoga* of God's *vibhūtis*', various powers of manifestations. And this chapter begins with

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's own statement. Sometimes, Arjuna questions and the chapter begins with that question. Sometimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself continues. Here, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself opens the chapter.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'Śrī Bhagavān said:'

भूय एव महाबाहो शृणु मे परमं वचः ।
यत्तेऽहं प्रीयमाणाय वक्ष्यामि हितकाम्यया ॥१॥

Bhūya eva mahābāho śṛṇu me paramam vacaḥ;
Yat te'ham prīyamāṇāya vakṣyāmi hita kāmyayā — 10. 1

'Again, O mighty-armed, do you listen to My supreme word, which I, wishing your welfare, will tell you who are delighted (to hear Me).'

Again, listen to Me, O Arjuna. *Bhūya* means 'again'; *śṛṇu me paramam vacaḥ,* 'please listen to My supreme word'. A word which contains a tremendous meaning, that is called *paramam vacaḥ.* Speeches can be empty, 'mere sound and fury signifying nothing', as Shakespeare says, or it can be profound; just like a beautiful beehive which is full of honey inside. Similarly, we can have words full of profound meaning. *Yatte'ham prīyamāṇāya,* 'I am conveying this to you because you are dear to Me'; *vakṣyāmi hita kāmyayā,* 'I am telling you in order to ensure your own welfare'.

न मे विदुः सुरगणाः प्रभवं न महर्षयः ।
अहमादिर्हि देवानां महर्षीणां च सर्वशः ॥२॥

Na me viduḥ suragaṇāḥ prabhavam na maharṣayaḥ;
Aham ādirhi devānām maharṣīṇām ca sarvaśaḥ — 10. 2

'Neither the hosts of *Devas*, nor the great *Ṛṣis*, know My origin, for in every way, I am the source of all the *Devas* and the great *Ṛṣis.*'

Neither the gods nor the *maharṣis*, great sages, know My origin. I am prior to all of them. That is a beautiful idea expressed first in the *Ṛg Veda* in

the *Nāsadīya Sūkta:* How could the gods, who are subsequent to creation, know Him? That is the language. He is beyond all these. So Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, they do not know Me; even the earliest gods and various sages do not know My origin.

यो मामजमनादिं च वेत्ति लोकमहेश्वरम् ।
असंमूढः स मर्त्येषु सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते ॥३॥

Yo mām ajam anādim ca vetti loka maheśvaram;
Asammūḍhaḥ sa martyeṣu sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate—10. 3

'One who knows Me, the birthless and beginningless One, the great Lord of the universe—such a one, among mortals, is undeluded, and is freed from all sins.'

Yo mām vetti, 'those who know Me'; *ajam anādim ca,* 'I am *ajam* and *anādim*'; *ajam* means 'unborn'. There is no birth for the supreme Divine; other things have birth, change and death. This one is immortal, changeless, birthless. *Anādim* means, 'beginningless'. *Vetti lokamaheśvaram,* 'one who knows Me as the supreme ruler of the universe'. The one guide and ruler of the universe is He; by His power the world moves. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* Yājñavalkya tells Maitreyī and Gārgī, particularly Gārgī, 'By the power of that imperishable Reality, the sun and the moon go in their respective courses, all the streams flow in the direction towards the ocean, … ' Here also Śrī Kṛṣṇa is referring to this, *lokamaheśvaram,* 'the supreme Lord of the universe'. *Asammūḍhaḥ sa martyeṣu,* 'that person is certainly *asammūḍhaḥ* among all human beings'; *mūḍha* means 'a fool', a deluded person; *asammūḍhaḥ* means 'a non-deluded person'. In Sanskrit, *mūḍha* is the only abusive word we have: 'he is a fool', we say like this, that is all. But, the other is *asammūḍhaḥ,* 'absolutely free from delusion, foolishness'; *sarva pāpaiḥ pramucyate,* 'such a one becomes freed from all sins', all weakness, because he or she has understood this profound truth, the Truth of all truths.

बुद्धिर्ज्ञानमसंमोहः क्षमा सत्यं दमः शमः ।
सुखं दुःखं भवोऽभावो भयं चाभयमेव च ॥४॥

Buddhirjñānam asammohaḥ kṣamā satyam damaḥ śamaḥ;
Sukham duḥkham bhavo'bhāvo bhayam ca abhayam eva ca—10. 4

'Intellect, knowledge, non-delusion, forbearance, truth, restraint of the external senses, calmness of heart, happiness, misery, birth, death, fear as well as fearlessness,'

अहिंसा समता तुष्टिस्तपो दानं यशोऽयशः ।
भवन्ति भावा भूतानां मत्त एव पृथग्विधाः ॥५॥

Ahimsā samatā tuṣṭiḥ tapo dānam yaśo'yaśaḥ;
Bhavanti bhāvā bhūtānām matta eva pṛthagvidhāḥ— 10. 5

'Non-injury, equality, contentment, austerity, benevolence, good name, (as well as) ill-fame—(these) different kinds of qualities of beings arise from Me alone.'

In two verses Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives in summary that, the good, bad, the indifferent, and everything have come from the One. Vedanta does not have good things coming from a God and bad things coming from a devil. Everything has come from one infinite Source. So, what are the items that have come from that Source? *Buddhiḥ,* 'intellect'; *jñāna,* 'knowledge'; *asammūḍhaḥ,* 'non-delusion'; similarly, *kṣamā,* 'forgiveness' comes from the divine; *satyam,* 'truth'; *damaḥ,* 'restraint of the external senses'; *śamaḥ*, 'calmness of heart'*; sukham,* 'happiness'; *duḥkham,* 'misery'; *bhavaḥ,* 'birth'; *abhāvaḥ,* 'death'; *bhayam,* 'fear'; *abhayam,* 'fearlessness'; *ahimsā,* 'non-injury or nonviolence'; *samatā,* 'sense of equality'; *tuṣṭiḥ,* 'contentment'; *tapaḥ,* 'austerity'; *dānam,* 'benevolence'; *yaśaḥ,* 'good name'; and *ayaśaḥ,* 'ill-name or ill-fame'. *Bhavanti bhāvā bhūtānām matta eva pṛthagvidhāḥ*, 'these different kinds of qualities of all beings arise from Me only.' That is the bold statement in Vedanta. Not only the good but also what you call the evil also come from the same source. Very often people shout, how can evil come from God?, as if evil and good are two absolute things. They are relative things only. What is good to one may be evil to another. What is good to you now may be evil to you a little later. So, Vedanta never made an absolute distinction between good and evil. They are relative values. And we are seeing it everyday today. Say, for example,

we have carbon dioxide going out of us; it is evil to us. But, it is very useful to the plants and the trees. Similarly, poison in a snake is no evil to the snake; it is evil only to the one whom the snake bites. In the snake, it is part of itself, its own nature. And, if you take a bit of it, it may stop your bleeding also. So, in this way, we discovered ages ago, that good and bad are relative. There is only one absolute, God himself. These good and evil are in the course of manifestation; the One assumes different aspects as now good, then bad, etc. The fire that burns a human being, can also give you warmth when it is a cold winter. Fire is neither good nor bad. So, everything in this world has its own status. Everything is mentioned here in these two verses as coming from Me, the Lord.

I gave the example some two Sundays ago of the article in America's *The National Geographic Magazine*, with the title, 'Sun is Our Mother', where the writer says that everything in the solar system is condensation of solar radiation—the good, the bad, everything. That doesn't make the sun bad at all! Bad in the manifested is not bad in the original source. And so, the cloth you wear, the food you take, the dirt you find around you, the digestive power in you, all these are nothing but manifestations of solar energy. This is a wonderful idea. This is the basis of the Advaitic vision—of the One behind the many. No two. No physical science can accept two behind the universe. Nor can Vedanta accept two behind the universe. There is only One. If you find the many here, you must derive the many from the One itself. That is boldness! These two verses give you that bold statement. *Matta eva,* 'they have come from Me only'; *pṛthagvidhāḥ,* 'in various forms'.

महर्षय: सप्त पूर्वे चत्वारो मनवस्तथा ।
मद्भावा मानसा जाता येषां लोक इमा: प्रजा: ॥६॥

Maharṣayaḥ sapta pūrve catvāro manavaḥ tathā;
Mat bhāvā mānasā jātā yeṣām loka imāḥ prajāḥ —10. 6

'The seven great *Ṛṣis*, the previous four, as well as the Manus who had their thoughts fixed on me, were born of My mind and from whom are these creatures in the world.'

This verse contains allusions to our ancient mythology, i.e. the beginning of creation. First Brahmā appeared; then from that Brahmā came the four Kumāras; then the Manus; then all the various Rudras; all these things came from there. Those things find mention in these verses. So, a little of that background one has to know. But, essentially it means that the whole universe has come from the One divine source. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *maharṣayaḥ sapta,* 'the seven *maharṣis*'; the idea of the seven *maharṣis* is so well known to all of us in India, what you call the 'Great bear', the seven stars in the sky. They (in west) call it the 'Great bear' in modern language. They are called the *sapta ṛṣis,* 'seven *Ṛṣis*'. *Pūrve catvāro,* 'the previous four'. In interpreting 'the previous four', several interpretations have been given which are not satisfactory at all. *Manavastathā*, 'also seven Manus'*;* out of fourteen Manus in the present day of Brahmā*,* there have been past seven Manus and seven more are yet to come.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak has said, after thorough investigation, that 'the four ancient', *catvāro pūrve,* means the four *vyūhas: Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna* and *Aniruddha*—the four manifestations of the Divine. They are called the four *vyūhas*. In the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Mahābhārata*, which is the inspiration for the *Gītā,* you find these four *vyūhas* mentioned. They are the four, nothing else can answer to these four. So, *catvāro pūrve* means*,* 'the four previous ones', these four *vyūhas. Manavastathā,* 'also the Manus'. Fourteen *Manvantaras* make for one particular age of the universe. So, we had Svāyambhuva Manu, the first Manu. Then, after the intermediate five Manus comes the Vaivasvata Manu. The seventh Manu is Vaivasvata. We are now living in the age of the Vaivasvata Manu. Each Manu's age will be millions of years. So, *manavastathā,* these are the seven Manus (from Svāyambhuva to Vaivasvata), namely, the seven Manus of the past. These are immense ranges of space and time calculations in our philosophy and theology. *Mat bhāvā*, 'they had their minds fixed on me'; *mānasā jātā,* and were 'born out of My mind', a projection of My mind. Brahmā himself is a projection of the Divine Nārāyaṇa. So also, are these Manus, the four *vyūhas* and the seven *Maharṣis*. All of them are divine mental projections. That is how the earliest creation has been mentioned. Absolutely subtle realities they were.

Later on, creation became more and more concrete, until it came to this manifested level.

Now, in dealing with creation, this is nearly the way modern astronomy also adopts: that, in the beginning, it is all absolutely subtle; no differences are there between things in the beginning. Later on, every second, it becomes more and more concrete; more and more differences appear, until you get this fixed universe which you experience everyday. There is such a diversity now, whereas in the beginning there was absolute unity. The scientists call it the point of singularity—the technical term in astro-physics today. From there the explosion took place, and one by one it began to manifest. These differences were not there in the beginning; atoms, molecules and even electrons, protons—none of these were there. Just condensed energy; that was all that existed. Later on, they became concretized into this and that. And the whole universe has come from that One; and also it will return to that One towards the end of this experience of manifestation. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'I am the beginning of all these *devas* and *maharṣis.* Those who know Me as the origin of all this universe, they become free from delusion.' And so manifestations begin with *maharṣayaḥ sapta pūrve catvāro manavaḥ tathā, mat bhāvā mānasā jātā.* They are called 'mental creations'; a wonderful idea. In fact, the whole universe was only a pulsation of the Divine mind: pure consciousness pulsation. They didn't have differences. Later on, they underwent condensation. Even in our day-to-day life, you act; behind your action, there is mental pulsation. First we think, we decide, we desire, and then we execute it into action. The house that you see built, is a solid house. Where was it before? In your mind; in your conception that, 'this house must come'. Then you prepare the plan. Then you build it up. So, in all these experiences you will find, 'the subtle precedes the gross'; and later on, the subtle will follow the gross in the inverse process when the world is being wound up. Evolution becomes involution, going backwards as it were. Just like in today's physics we say, a primordial explosion made for the manifestation of the universe; implosion will make for the return of the many into the One once again.

एतां विभूतिं योगं च मम यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।
सोऽविकम्पेन योगेन युज्यते नात्र संशयः ॥७॥

Etām vibhūtim yogam ca mama yo vetti tattvataḥ;
So'vikampena yogena yujyate nātra samśayaḥ — 10. 7

'One who in reality knows these manifold manifestations of My being and (this) *yoga* power of Mine, becomes established in the unshakeable *yoga*; there is no doubt about it.'

Such a person who knows this truth, he or she develops *avikampa yoga,* '*yoga* which cannot be shaken'; *kampa* means 'shaking'; *avikampa* means 'unshakable', absolutely steady. That is what we seek; a steady mind, a steady *buddhi,* a steady life, not shaking. We are going to be strong and steady. So, such persons achieve *avikampa yoga,* 'unshakeable *yoga*'. How? *Etām vibhūtim yogam ca mama yo vetti tattvataḥ,* 'those who know *truly,* as it is in itself, My *vibhūti* and *yoga,* this manifestation of Mine as the universe and the power that made for that manifestation'. *Vibhūti* means 'power of manifestation'; *yoga* means 'the power that made for that manifestation'. *Yo vetti,* 'those who understand' this truth; *tattvataḥ,* 'truly'; *saḥ,* 'such a person'; *avikampena yogena,* 'by this unshakeable *yoga*'; *yujyate nātra samśayaḥ,* 'there is no doubt at all that he or she achieves' that *avikampa yoga,* 'the steady mind'. A steady mind is reflected in one aspect of the human physical individuality, namely, the eye. When the eye is steady, you can take for granted that the mind also is steady. If the eye is unsteady, mind also is unsteady. The eye is the index of the mind. The face itself is the index of the soul, according to Shakespeare, and we all accept it. And the eye is a great index of the state of the mind. Calm and steady eyes mean calm and steady mind. So, we can achieve this *avikampa yoga* by this kind of understanding. We become absolutely steady. *Nātra samśayaḥ,* 'there is no doubt about it.' So, it is good for us to struggle to develop that kind of steadiness, and make the eyes also calm and steady. It is a wonderful achievement. It doesn't come by itself; you have to work for it. That is how we try to bring fulfilment in our life. So, this is an important verse: *yo vetti tattvataḥ,* 'those who understand it truly'; *saḥ avikampena yogena yujyate, na atra samśayaḥ,* 'he or she becomes endowed with that unshakeable *yoga;* there is no doubt about it.'

अहं सर्वस्य प्रभवो मत्त: सर्वं प्रवर्तते ।
इति मत्वा भजन्ते मां बुधा भावसमन्विता: ॥८॥

Aham sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvam pravartate;
Iti matvā bhajante mām budhā bhāva samanvitāḥ — 10. 8

'I am the origin of all; from Me everything evolves—thus thinking, the wise worship Me with loving consciousness.'

Aham sarvasya prabhavo, 'I am the Origin of everything in this universe'. Whatever you see in a tree—leaves, twigs, branches, then flowers and fruits—all of them originate from the seed. So, this is the origin of everything—Myself, the infinite Divine. *Mattaḥ sarvam pravartate,* 'from Me emanate all things'; *pravartate,* 'manifests or emanates'. *Iti matvā,* 'knowing thus'; *bhajante mām budhā,* 'wise people worship Me' with this knowledge. What kind of wise people? *Bhāva samanvitāḥ*, 'people with loving consciousness'. *Bhāva* means 'emotion, love, *bhakti*'; this is the nature of *bhakti.* You can also have a non-*bhakti* consciousness and also worship. But, in this path of *bhakti,* this kind of loving consciousness is essential. It makes you rich with feeling. This is the difference between an austere philosophy and *bhakti.* Take for example, the philosophy of Marcus Aurelius, a Roman emperor; a very austere philosophy it is. In our country also there are plenty of such austere schools of philosophy. The other is very very human, full of emotion, capacity to love and to receive love. That is a richer human personality. That music of life is sweeter than the other music which is rather dry at a certain level, though at the highest level it may be perfectly fine. But at the lower levels it appears to be more dry. Comparing between these two, Sri Ramakrishna used to give an illustration. You can take that illustration and make your own meaning out of it. He said, 'in the temple of Dakshineswar, they play music. One man takes a pipe and simply goes on making a sound; the drone as we call it in musical language. Just the drone, the background music. The other man has another musical instrument with seven holes. And he produces certain notes out of it. The former produces only one note; this man produces seven notes. Which is sweeter? The seven-note is sweeter; you don't like to hear the drone for a long time; for a short time it is okay. So here you have this *bhakti* as the fulfilment of *jñāna,* manifesting in action. You get that complete human life here. There is joy in it. There is variety in it. That is why Sri Ramakrishna compares it with the *sapta-svara* instrument. The other is *eka-svara* instrument called the drone. So, a *jñāni*, as usually

understood in our Vedantic tradition, is of that nature; very dry, can't feel any joy for anything. If such a one looks at a baby's face, he or she will say, it is all *māyā.* He or she does not find anything worthwhile in it. Such a one will say, 'I can't enjoy the smile of a child, the beauty of the sun, beauty of the earth. Why? All these things are delusions. The one transcendental Reality alone is real'. There you will find this kind of drone music. The other is *sapta-svara,* beautiful music, rich and fine. The best *bhakti* of India and the best *bhakti* of all religions belong to this category. Richness, diversity and intense humanity—that is the religion the *Gītā* expounds; intensely human. Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself was such a person. He had a very rich heart, rich human feelings, responding to human situations.

Today, Sri Ramakrishna, full of joy, conveys a religion of joy. You cannot go near an austere person; you are afraid of him. In our homes we have generally two types of people: perhaps an uncle, very austere; people are afraid of him, and won't go near him. There are other people to whom children go because they are very pleasing, with a smile and all that. Two types you can see. In this case, this *bhakti* will draw out millions and millions of people, intensely human, with a capacity to love and be loved. That is the description given in this chapter, and the whole of the *Gītā* is based upon that kind of outlook: intensely human. And we can dig affection in others and make others dig affection in us. This is the type of *bhakti* Śrī Kṛṣṇa is preaching, and yet it is based on the highest *jñāna,* the supremely divine principle behind this universe. And so *jñāna, bhakti* and *karma,* all combined together—that is the integrated *yoga* of the *Gītā.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa had referred to this: *Jñānam vijñāna sahitam,* '*jñāna* along with *vijñāna*'. *Vijñāna* means experience, day-to-day experience. That *jñāna* which finds expression in day-to-day experience in human relationships etc., that is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa said He was going to expound in the ninth chapter. So, the *Vibhūti Yoga* chapter has importance from this point of view. What is called *Māyā* in the school of Vedanta, is called here the 'glory of the Divine', the manifestation of the Divine in the form of this nature around us.

In the *Ṛg Veda*, this idea was started very early. There is a beautiful *mantra* which says: *Yasyaite himavanto mahitvā,* 'Whose glory these Himalayas proclaim'. See the poetic approach. The glory of the Himalayas;

whose glory does it proclaim? Of that supreme Divine Reality behind this universe.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, towards the end of this chapter will say in the last but one verse, in verse 41, that 'wherever you see extraordinary power manifesting and uplifting humanity, know My power is manifest there'. He gives you complete freedom to see the Divine in any type of manifestation, in any part of the world. That is going to be a joyous conclusion of this chapter of *Vibhūti Yoga.*

For example, you see a Gandhiji manifesting enormous power to lift up humanity, to release humanity from slavery, and to increase love and nonviolence in society. Millions were moved by his single utterance. That power is 'Mine', says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. 'My' power is there. We can see the same thing in a person like Abraham Lincoln. It can be in any one, in any part of the world. These are the people who show that the supreme Divine power that underlies the universe is manifested through a few individuals here and there. Salute them as the Divine power is manifest in them. That way Śrī Kṛṣṇa will conclude this chapter.

Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *aham sarvasya prabhavo,* 'I am the origin of all this universe'; *mattaḥ sarvam pravartate,* 'everything comes from Me'; *iti matvā bhajante mām,* 'knowing this they worship Me'; *budhā,* 'the wise people'; *bhāva samnvitāḥ,* 'full of love in their hearts'; divine love is in their hearts. They are not dry, that is one thing we must remember. A living human personality, full of concern for others; you can go near and feel happy in his or her company. That kind of a rich human personality, emotionally rich, attracts others. Any system that destroys the emotions of a human being will destroy humanity itself. Without emotion there is no meaning to human life.

The famous neurologist of England, Sir Charles Sherrington, said, 'can a bird build its nest without the power of emotion?' Consider a bird just building a nest: What is impelling it to bring small pieces of wood or leaves, put it in a corner, again bring another, and yet another to make a nest? What is impelling it to do that? That emotion directed towards the baby that is to come for which a house is to be provided. That emotion makes the bird do all that work. You remove the nest, again she does it.

That is where you can see the power of emotion. In fact, the best work you do is when you have emotion impelling you to work. If you merely have dry intellectual knowledge, you can't do any great work efficiently. Efficiency and energy come from emotion, not from intellectual knowledge, which can only direct that emotional energy. But the real impulse comes from the emotion. It makes you work at your highest and best. Take that emotion away and you become callous, absolutely callous and unresponsive. In fact, that is what we call, in ordinary language, the development of the heart. Brain and the heart—the brain you may develop; but you will be a very dry person if there is no heart along with the brain. That has been our misfortune in India for a few centuries. We developed the brain; we left the heart just as it was—a very very contracted heart, with no concern for others. Even now you find millions of us without any concern for others. There is no heart at all. Only 'I', 'I', 'I'. Such a person gets a modern education; and that makes him or her much worse. Without education he or she would have been much less troublesome. With education it becomes a mere nuisance to society. So, Swami Vivekananda said, 'develop the heart'; expand your heart. Then your emotions will function; there will be a sense of concern for others, love and care for others, a spirit of service; and with the intelligence behind all this, it will make for a wonderful personality. In this *Gītā bhakti,* you get both intelligence and emotion fused together. That is the nature of *buddhi;* in *buddhi,* emotion, intelligence and will, become fused together to give a highly efficient character. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will tell us a few verses later, *dadāmi buddhi yogam tam,* 'those whom I wish to bless, I give them that *buddhi*'*; yena mām upayānti te,* 'by which they find their way to Me.' I do not have to help them further. 'I have given them the best instrument, the *buddhi,* to make for success in life in any department.' That is the language that he will use some verses later.

मच्चित्ता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ।
कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥९॥

Maccittā madgata prāṇā bodhayantaḥ parasparam;
Kathayantaśca mām nityam tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca — 10. 9

‘With their minds wholly in Me, with their senses absorbed in Me, enlightening each other, and always speaking of Me, they are satisfied and delighted.’

Such people who have that purified *buddhi,* whose emotion, intellect and will have been fused together, they are a special type of people. *Maccittāḥ,* ‘their *citta* or mind has been fixed on Me’; *madgata prāṇā,* ‘their whole bio-energy and psychic energy have also been directed towards Me’; *bodhayantaḥ parasparam,* ‘enlightening each other’. When two such people meet, one will enlighten the other; that is the nature of their acquisition, and not pull each other down. *Kathayantaśca mām nityam,* ‘constantly speaking about Me’, the One behind the many. They are dealing with the many; they talk about the One behind the many to give value to the many. Then, *tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca,* ‘they enjoy side by side with satisfaction’. Their life is a continuous satisfaction, a continuous delight, *tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca;* a wonderful idea! Joy becomes a permanent feature of human life. How?, by this method.

In *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* you will find mentioned that Sri Ramakrishna’s room was a mart of joy. That is the language ‘M’, the author, has used there. Full of joy, always radiating joy. In Bengali it is called, *majār kuṭi*, ‘the *kuṭi* for *majā’,* ‘the hut of joy’, or ‘the mart of joy’. In one of the spiritual books of India, namely, *Pāṇḍava-gītā,* there is a verse. I like it very much and I found it to be the best description of Sri Ramakrishna of our time. That *śloka* says,

Nityotsavam bhavatyeṣām nityam śrī nityamaṅgalam;
Yeṣām hṛdistho bhagavān maṅgalāyatano hariḥ —

A profound verse. Hari is the supreme Divine Reality that is present in the heart of all beings, but unmanifest. Hari is also called Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, etc. All these words refer to the same Divine Reality. These are merely different names of the one Divine Reality from whom the whole universe has come. Naturally, He is in everything in this universe. If you can manifest that Hari, what will happen? Hari is the abode of ‘all that is good and auspicious’, *maṅgalam*. If that Hari manifests in your heart, what happens to your life? *Nityotsavam bhavatyeṣām,* ‘their lives become a perpetual *utsava* or festival’; *nityam śrī,* ‘*śrī,* prosperity and welfare,

manifests at every moment in their lives'; *nityamaṅgalam,* 'everything auspicious also manifests always in their lives'; when? *Yeṣām hṛdistho bhagavān maṅgalāyatano hariḥ,* 'in whose hearts, *Bhagavān* Hari, who is *maṅgala āyatana* or embodiment of auspiciousness, has manifested'. Then life will be one of joy every minute. Some of the mystics have shown that continuous joy, as if something is welling up from within. You can read the life of Sufi mystics, Christian mystics, our own mystics, and you will find this type of Divine manifestation in them. That is why they were full of joy. They radiated joy all round. Vedanta describes the ultimate Reality as *sat,* 'truth', *cit,* 'Pure Consciousness', and as *ānanda,* 'bliss'. This is a profound experience; a few attain it; but many can try to achieve it and come more and more close to having that experience. But it is possible that this human life can be made really joyous and beautiful when Lord Hari manifests in the heart of men and women. At present He is not manifest; only our own ego is manifest in us. We have to shed this ego through a spirit of service. Service is the best means to shed the ego. It is a wonderful teaching. By leading a life of service, we reduce the ego to thin proportions. And as the ego becomes less and less, the divine becomes more and more manifest in the heart of a human being.

Somebody said that in the Bible it is written: 'let Thy kingdom come'. Everyday we pray, 'let Thy kingdom come'. We go on repeating it hundreds of times; yet that kingdom doesn't come at all. What is the reason? And he gave the reason; the corollary has not been achieved. What is that? 'Let *my* kingdom go!' Then only His kingdom will come. The little 'I' must go. Then the Divine will manifest Himself in the heart. But somehow or other, in our day-to-day religious life, it is 'my' kingdom all the time; no place for 'His' kingdom at all. Even when you go to the temple, you lecture to God there all the time. You don't hear what God has to say! Noise, noise, noise. How can His kingdom come unless the conditions are satisfied? When you go to any temple, immediately become silent, inward, try to listen to what the Lord has to say to you. Learning to listen is a great thing in spiritual life. 'The first doorway to *yoga*,' says Śaṅkarācārya, in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi,* 'is control of speech', *yogasya prathamam dvāram vāṅnirodhaḥ.* That is what we have lost for centuries together. It has to change now. We must be endowed with more thinking, more feeling, less talking, and more working

with the hands. So, this idea, that we can expose our heart to the manifestation of the Divine within and experience that fullness of joy, that fulfilment, is something wonderful.

Vedanta presents religion in the most rational way, studying human possibilities. In a hunger for food, the hunger is satisfied by taking food. In a hunger for knowledge, we satisfy it by education, by study, by thinking. It is a palpable hunger. Similarly is the hunger for the Divine. No amount of books can give you satisfaction. An experience of the Divine alone can satisfy that hunger. That is a wonderful hunger. So, our scriptures place before humanity all these possibilities and invite each one to go from one possibility to the next. Never be stagnant at one level. Even at the intellectual level, do not be stagnant. There is still one step more to go. Then you will achieve real joy, real fulfilment in the true sense of the term. So, in the next *śloka*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says something unique:

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥१०॥

Teṣām satata yuktānām bhajatām prītipūrvakam;
Dadāmi buddhiyogam tam yena mām upayānti te — 10. 10

'To them, ever steadfast and serving Me with affection, I give that *buddhiyoga* by which they come unto Me.'

What do 'I' do to all such people who are struggling to rise to this higher level of experience of joy? I bless them, I encourage them. How? *Teṣām satata yuktānām,* 'to those who are constant *yogīs*'. *Yukta* is the word for *yogī.* One who is a *yogī* is also a *yukta.* These are all different forms of the same root word with the same meaning of 'union with God'. Lokamanya Tilak has said in his *Gītā Rahasya* that the word *yoga* and its various other forms have appeared over eighty times throughout the *Gītā.* So, here is a *yukta,* but a very special type of *yukta, satatayukta,* 'constantly in a *yoga* state of mind'. *Satata* means 'always, constant'. *Bhajatām prītipūrvakam,* 'those who worship Me, adore Me, with great love'; what do I do to them? *Dadāmi buddhiyogam tam,* 'to them I give *buddhiyoga*'. A wonderful *yoga,* the *yoga* of reason, of 'equable reason', as Tilak translates

it. Mind is always calm, steady; it is full of luminosity; that kind of *buddhi* is the best guide in human life. *Yena mām upayānti te,* 'with the help of that *buddhi,* they find their way to Me'. I give them the right attitude, the right reason, by which they find their way towards Me. This is a very great utterance. How does God help a human being? In many ways; but the best way is by helping him or her to develop the right attitude. One of the great teachings of Buddha's eightfold path is 'right attitude'. That is the greatest thing in life: right attitude. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'I give them *buddhiyoga.*' This was already stated in the second chapter. The best we can have in life is *buddhiyoga.* We can live at the physical level like any creeping creatures on the earth. We can live at the sensory level like all animals on earth. We can live at the mental-intellectual level like all the intellectuals of the world. We can also live at the high spiritual level, which is the deepest reality that is within all; that is the fullest life. These are the various levels wherefrom Consciousness functions. When Consciousness functions at the sensory level, we are happy, we are miserable, we can be good, we can be bad, we can be wicked; all these we can be. No prediction is possible there. The sense organs have no direction. At the intellectual level also it is the same. You can be good, you can be bad; you can be extremely wicked also. But once you touch the deeper spiritual level, you become a completely positive individual. Love, concern, dedication, spirit of service, etc., become a by-product of that spiritual development that has taken place in you. You don't have to struggle for it. A rose doesn't struggle to send out its beautiful scent; it naturally goes out. So also, a human being becomes naturally good, naturally *dhārmic*, naturally moral and ethical. In all these, a higher nature than the external physical nature is involved. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here, 'I give him or her *buddhiyoga*', *yena mām upayānti te,* 'with the help of that *yoga buddhi*, he or she finds the way to Me'; comes to Me by himself or herself. The best blessing that we can get from the Divine is that kind of clear thinking and pure reason, with the touch of the Atman behind. *Buddhiyoga* means that. That is why it is said in the *Mahābhārata:* when gods want to destroy a person, they turn away his or her *buddhi* in a bad direction. Then he or she will destroy oneself. So, here, Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks of the positive side: 'I bless people with this *buddhiyoga, yoga* of *buddhi*'. *And that is the central teaching of the Gītā.* Character-efficiency comes from *buddhiyoga,* the *yoga* of *buddhi.* That was also the teaching of the

second chapter: *buddhau śaraṇam anviccha,* 'take refuge in that *buddhi*'. Then all life will be wonderful. High character will manifest in a person. So, that is the blessing we have to seek from the Divine. Give me pure *buddhi.* That is all what I need. Everything will come through that one single instrument. That is why the *Ṛg Vedic* prayer, the *Gāyatrī,* has become the greatest universal prayer. There we pray for that *buddhi.* That is the central theme of the *Gāyatrī*. Why is it so great? Because of this: the greatest prayer is the prayer for an illumined *buddhi. Dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt,* 'endow us with that *dhī*', i.e. *buddhi,* that *yogabuddhi* referred to here. The full *Gāyatrī* is: *Tat savitur vareṇyam, bhargo devasya dhīmahi, dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt*—a three line prayer coming in the *Ṛg Veda,* five thousand years ago, with such universal relevance. That is the beauty of that prayer. Here, Śrī Kṛṣṇa reiterates that kind of prayer.

One more important message that Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives in verse eleven:

तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थमहमज्ञानजं तमः ।
नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥११॥

Teṣām eva anukampārtham aham ajñānajam tamaḥ;
Nāśayāmi ātmabhāvastho jñānadīpena bhāsvatā — 10. 11

'Out of mere compassion for them, I, abiding in their hearts, destroy the darkness (in them) born of ignorance, by the luminous lamp of knowledge.'

Another wonderful verse. *Teṣām eva,* 'to all such people'*; anukampārtham*, 'out of compassion to them'; what do I do? *Aham ajñānajam tamaḥ nāśayāmi,* 'I destroy their darkness and delusion born of ignorance'; *aham nāśayāmi,* 'I destroy'. How do I do that? *Átma bhāvastho,* 'by establishing Myself in their hearts' or 'I begin to manifest in their hearts, helping them to achieve this tremendous transformation'. All that is dark, all that is delusive, are washed away. The bright light of knowledge comes. Everything becomes clear. 'That is the blessing that I confer on the devotee without his or her knowledge; silently, quietly, I do that.' How? *Átma bhāvastho,* 'by entering into them'. What do I do there? That is a wonderful idea conveyed by the next phrase. *Jñāna dīpena bhāsvatā,* 'by the lamp of knowledge, brightening up everything'. This is the service the

Lord does to His devotee, to the spiritual seeker. Then, he or she will be always on the right path, moving always towards the Divine and towards friendship and love for all beings in the world. That is the type of human transformation that takes place through this type of *bhakti* combined with *jñāna* as was taught earlier in the ninth chapter, and as taught now in the tenth chapter.

This is a very great verse: lighting the *jñānadīpa.* Now these are all spiritual ideas. We have symbolic acts to express these great ideas. You enter a house; you light a lamp. What a great spiritual significance we attach to it! For a Hindu home, lighting a lamp in the front is of a great significance. Its counterpart is here: light *within*. This—lighting the outside—is what we can do now. That is a symbol of a greater light we have to get lit in our own hearts. Nobody loves darkness. We want light; the heart also cries for light and not for darkness. And therefore, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* another universal prayer of the human heart is found: *asato mā sad gamaya,* 'lead me from the unreal to the Real'; *tamaso mā jyotir gamaya,* 'lead me from darkness to Light'; *mṛtyor mā amṛtam gamaya,* 'lead me from death to Immortality'. This is the prayer from the human heart not only from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* but also from many spiritual books of the world—this human craving for life, light and knowledge. Light up *jñānadīpa;* it is our own responsibility; we struggle, and at the last point, the Lord comes and helps us. Only when we struggle, can He help. If we are careless, it means that we don't know its value. Suppose God lights the lamp in our hearts and if we say, 'we don't want it', then it means we are not fit for it, we are not ready for it. But when we become sensitive, we struggle, then this great help comes from the Divine. So, grace comes from being grace-worthy. We prepare ourselves for the touch of that grace. But grace comes. That is how the higher religions of the world have expressed human progress in spirituality: your own effort, and the grace of the Divine, blending beautifully in all high spiritual developments.

Till now it was Śrī Kṛṣṇa who was speaking. Arjuna now begins to speak in praise of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in this verse:

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca —

'Arjuna said:'

परं ब्रह्म परं धाम पवित्रं परमं भवान् ।
पुरुषं शाश्वतं दिव्यमादिदेवमजं विभुम् ॥१२॥

Param brahma param dhāma pavitram paramam bhavān;
Puruṣam śāśvatam divyam ādidevam ajam vibhum—10. 12

'You are the supreme Brahman, the supreme Abode, the supreme Purifier. The Eternal, the Self-luminous *Puruṣa,* the Primordial *Deva*, Birthless, and All-pervading. '

Param brahma, 'you are that supreme Brahman'; *param dhāma,* 'you are that supreme Abode'; *paramam pavitram bhavān,* 'you are the supremely purifying thing' in this world; *puruṣam śāśvatam divyam,* 'that eternal divine Person' you are; *ādidevam,* 'that primordial divine Person'; *ajam,* 'unborn'; and *vibhum,* 'all-pervasive'. Saying this Arjuna continues:

आहुस्त्वामृषय: सर्वे देवर्षिर्नारदस्तथा ।
असितो देवलो व्यास: स्वयं चैव ब्रवीषि मे ॥१३॥

Áhustvām ṛṣayaḥ sarve devarṣiḥ nāradaḥ tathā;
Asito devalo vyāsaḥ svayam caiva bravīṣi me — 10. 13

'So say all the *ṛṣis,* the *deva-ṛṣi* Nārada as well as Asita, Devala, and Vyāsa; You also say so unto me.'

Arjuna is quoting the sages here. 'All the sages speak about You in this way', *Áhuḥ tvām ṛṣayaḥ sarve;* including *devarṣiḥ nāradaḥ tathā,* 'as also the great *devarṣi,* Nārada'. He also speaks of You in this way: *puruṣam śāśvatam divyam ādidevam.* Other sages like Asita, Devala, and Vyāsa, speak of You in this way. Even the greatest sages speak of You in this way. If anybody is honoured by great people, that honoured person is certainly a supremely honoured person. Ordinary people can praise anybody, but here extraordinary people are also praising the Divine. That is the greatness of God Himself. *Svayam caiva bravīṣi me,* 'and You also say the same to me'.

You are only confirming what the sages have said about You. All this is true, affirms Arjuna.

सर्वमेतदृतं मन्ये यन्मां वदसि केशव ।
न हि ते भगवन् व्यक्तिं विदुर्देवा न दानवाः ॥१४॥

Sarvam etat ṛtam manye yanmām vadasi keśava;
Na hi te bhagavan vyaktim viduḥ devā na dānavāḥ —10. 14

'I regard all this that you say to me as true, O Keśava. Verily, O *Bhagavān,* neither the *devas* nor the *dānavas* know your personality.'

Ṛtam means 'true'. *Sarvam etat ṛtam manye,* 'I consider all this to be true'; *yat mām vadasi keśava,* 'what you tell me, O Keśava'. I accept it, I consider it as true. *Nahi te bhagavan vyaktim viduḥ,* 'O Bhagavan, they do not know Your personality'; *devā na dānavāḥ,* 'neither *devās* or gods, nor *dānavas* or *asuras* can really understand' the true dimension of Your personality. You are infinite in every sense of the term.

स्वयमेवात्मनात्मानं वेत्थ त्वं पुरुषोत्तम ।
भूतभावन भूतेश देवदेव जगत्पते ॥१५॥

Svayam eva ātmanā ātmānam vettha tvam puruṣottama;
Bhūta bhāvana bhūteśa devadeva jagatpate — 10. 15

'Verily, You Yourself know Yourself by Yourself, O supreme Puruṣa or Person, O Source of beings, O Lord of beings, O *Deva* of *devas,* O Ruler of the world.'

Nobody can understand You, but You can understand Yourself, *svayam eva ātmanā ātmānam vettha tvam,* 'by Yourself You know Yourself'; *puruṣottama,* 'O Supreme Puruṣa'; *bhūta bhāvana,* 'the one nourisher of all beings in the world'; *bhūteśa,* 'the Master of all beings in the world'; *devadeva,* 'the God of gods'; *jagatpate,* 'O Master of this universe'. These are various adjectives which Arjuna uses to refer to the greatness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

वक्तुमर्हस्यशेषेण दिव्या ह्यात्मविभूतय: ।
याभिर्विभूतिभिर्लोकानिमांस्त्वं व्याप्य तिष्ठसि ॥१६॥

Vaktum arhasyaśeṣeṇa divyā hyātmavibhūtayaḥ;
Yābhiḥ vibhūtibhiḥ lokān imān tvam vyāpya tiṣṭhasi—10. 16

'It behoves You to speak, without reserve, about Your divine attributes by which, filling all these worlds, You exist.'

You must tell me of all Your divine attributes, divine manifestations; I will be very happy to listen to this from Your own mouth; *aśeṣeṇa,* 'entirely'. *Vaktum arhasi,* 'it is fit that You tell me all this'; what kind of thing? *Divyā hi ātmavibhūtayaḥ,* 'Your own divine manifestations'; *yābhir vibhūtibhir lokān imān tvam vyāpya tiṣṭhasi,* 'by which manifestations, You remain encompassing this universe'; what are they?, I would like to know. Arjuna is asking this question: God is transcendental; He is also immanent in the universe; what are those manifestations of the Divine Reality in this world?, I would like to know. And a devotee or *bhakta is not interested in the transcendental dimension of the Divine. A bhakta* is interested in the manifested dimension of the Divine, with whom he can communicate, establish love relationship, *bhakti* relationship; that is the nature of all *bhaktas*. The transcendental dimension of Brahman is a tremendous experience. But, as a rule, devotees all over the world—Hindu devotees, Christian devotees, Muslim devotees, all of them—like to enjoy God as one human being enjoys another human being. They want to establish a love-relationship with the Divine. Those glories by which You are enveloping the whole world, tell me all of them. 'All of them' are the words Arjuna has used here. Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say later on, 'how can I say "all of them"? A few as samples I can convey to you.'

कथं विद्यामहं योगिंस्त्वां सदा परिचिन्तयन् ।
केषु केषु च भावेषु चिन्त्योऽसि भगवन्मया ॥१७॥

Katham vidyām aham yogin tvām sadā paricintayan;
Keṣu keṣu ca bhāveṣu cintyo'si bhagavan mayā — 10. 17

‘How shall I, O *Yogī,* meditating on You always, ever know You? In what things, O *Bhagavān*, are You to be thought of by me?’

Katham vidyām aham yogin, ‘how can I understand you, O Yogin’; *sadā paricintayan,* ‘by constantly meditating upon You’, how do I come to understand Your true nature, O great Yogin? Śrī Kṛṣṇa is considered a great yogin. *Keṣu keṣu ca bhāveṣu cintyo’si bhagavan mayā,* ‘which are the entities in the world in which I can think of or meditate upon You?’; because the whole world is Your manifestation, give me those forms in which I can meditate upon You.

विस्तरेणात्मनो योगं विभूतिं च जनार्दन ।
भूयः कथय तृप्तिर्हि शृण्वतो नास्ति मेऽमृतम् ॥१८॥

Vistareṇātmano yogam vibhūtim ca janārdana;
Bhūyaḥ kathaya tṛptirhi śṛṇvato nāsti me’mṛtam — 10. 18

‘Speak to me again in detail, O Janārdana, of your *yoga*-powers and attributes, for I am never satiated in hearing the ambrosia (of your speech).’

‘Please say once again all these various *vibhūtis* that You have. I am not at all satiated by listening to them.’ *Yogam,* Your tremendous ‘*yoga*-power’, by which the One has become the many; that is the greatest *yoga*-power. The Lord is one, but He has become the many in the universe. *Vistareṇa ātmano yogam,* ‘extensively tell me about this *yoga*-power’; *vibhūtim ca janārdana,* ‘through which, O Janārdana, You become manifested as the universe’; *bhūyaḥ kathaya,* ‘tell me that again’; *tṛptirhi me nāsti*, ‘I have no satisfaction (satiation)’ in listening to your speech which is *amṛtam,* ‘which is nectar to me’. To those who can appreciate it, it is nectar; if you have not the capacity to appreciate, then it is not nectar. A spiritual teaching is a nectar to those who are spiritually inclined. To all others it is nothing. There is such a thing as the capacity to appreciate greatness. It is a remarkable capacity in a human being. Whether it is art, literature, philosophy, or religion, the capacity for appreciation depends upon the cultural level of the individual concerned. We appreciate music, but some people do not appreciate music at all; they don’t have that musical ear. Now, we know Indian music; suppose you find someone singing Western music, you can’t

appreciate it, because you don't know the nature of that music. So, appreciation comes from a certain cultural and educational level. Spiritual appreciation comes from a certain spiritual growth in the individual.

We in India have got a tremendous power of spiritual appreciation. When any spiritually great person appears in our midst, we watch and see how he or she behaves, find out if he or she is genuinely great, and appreciate him or her. We never kill or crucify a spiritual teacher in our country. In other countries that appreciation is lacking. A Jesus, if he were in India, do you think he would have been crucified? Not at all. Here it is not possible, because we see true religion in such persons. We appreciate a person who lives the spiritual life; not one who is merely a scholar or a priest. They are all needed, but are secondary. This is primary. Throughout our history, one of the greatest blessings imparted by our culture on our people is this capacity to appreciate a truly spiritual personality. Sometimes one may speak most unpalatable things; still if his or her character is high, we appreciate him or her. A Buddha: he denounced many of the religious practices of that time. And yet nobody harmed him. We all respected him at that time. He was treated as an enlightened one. Today, Vivekananda; he has criticised the foibles of the Indian society more fiercely than anybody. And yet we admire him. He is a great soul. In any other country, Buddha and Vivekananda would have been chopped off! Take it for granted. All over the world it is so. There is a reason behind it. The reason is twofold. One, we have been taught that religion is not mere belief; it is experience. Even an unbeliever has a status in our Vedanta. That is number one. Secondly, these great teachers showed in their lives high character. All of them were universal; there was nothing narrow, nothing parochial. Whatever they taught was universal. *Mānava dharma, 'dharma* for human beings' and not anything sectarian.

This kind of blessing India has got from where? From the philosophy and spirituality of the Upaniṣads. That has been percolating down all these thousands of years until our people have been educated in this vision. Seek for the spiritual in a person, not for his or her showy ways, not for his or her sacerdotal office. We see only the quality of spirituality in the person. Now, this blessing on the Indian people, coming from our past, has been recognized by many thinkers and writers. But I specially mention the late

Pope of the Catholic Church who visited India some years ago—not the recent Pope but the earlier Pope. In one of his observations in Bombay—this was reported in the Roman Catholic paper in Rome—he asked his assistant, 'Who are these thousands of people here? Are they Catholics?' 'No, sir.' 'Are they Christians?' 'No, sir.' 'That means they are all Hindus! Majority of them Hindus!' Then he said, 'that is what I see as the greatness of this country. These Hindus came to see in me not the head of the Catholic Church, not the head of the Christian religion, but a man of God. That is India.'

That is a wonderful tribute that he gave to India at that time. Literally true. And so, no great religious teacher is killed or persecuted in this country. Remember that. If that were not so, Vivekananda would not have lived at all. He would have been killed in the first year itself. So also Buddha. Śaṅkarācārya also was very radical in his own time. And this I call 'Indian Wisdom'. Nowhere else is it found. Why did that Bahavullah suffer martyrdom in Iran? If Bahavullah were here would he have been killed? Not at all. He started a reform. Yes, it is up to you. Show by your character that you are divine; and we will worship you, we will honour you. That is the attitude. That means, the Hindu has been taught to seek religion in experience, in character, not in profession or belief. That is why even unbelievers are respected here, if they have character. One may be an atheist, but if he or she has high character, capacity to serve people, then we respect him or her. We don't kill him or her here. Nowhere else is this attitude present; you can take it for granted. Study the history of the whole world. This is the uniqueness of India from the time of the Vedas up to this day. We have not departed from it, though, for want of knowledge of these central features of the Hindu tradition, sometimes we misbehaved in the modern period due to various circumstantial difficulties. But that is India. The eternal *Amar Bhārat,* we call it.

So, this wonderful sentence is uttered by Arjuna here: this immortal story of truth when I listen to, I am not satiated at all. I want to hear more and more and still more. The *bhakta's* reaction to the Divine is exactly like this, 'I want to hear more of it.' It is so inspiring. That is the food for our souls, because we have started to feel the hunger of the soul. Hunger of the body is secondary. Hunger of the intellect also is secondary. Hunger of the

soul is primary. When that hunger comes, these two hungers fall into insignificance. That has been the experience of humanity all over. The Christian saint has the same feeling. He is hungry for the divine, a touch of the divine. He doesn't care for physical glory, physical pleasure, name or fame, nothing. He wants a marvellous touch of the soul. Sufi saints have the same experience all over. There you can see the universal dimension of what we call religion. India has recognized it. Therefore, it respects every religion. We shall preserve this attitude, strengthen it, and shall create a new India based upon it. That is the importance of this particular teaching.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said:'

हन्त ते कथयिष्यामि दिव्या ह्यात्मविभूतय: ।
प्राधान्यत: कुरुश्रेष्ठ नास्त्यन्तो विस्तरस्य मे ॥१९॥

Hanta te kathayiṣyāmi divyā hyātmavibhūtayaḥ;
Prādhānyataḥ kuruśreṣṭha nāstyanto vistarasya me—10. 19

'O yes, I shall speak to you now, O best of Kurus, of My divine attributes, according to their prominence; there is no end to the particulars of My manifestation.'

Hanta te kathayiṣyāmi, 'well, I am going to tell you'; *divyā hi ātma vibhūtayaḥ,* 'My *ātma vibhūtis*'; how? *Prādhānyataḥ,* 'some essential ones only'; why? *Nāstyanto vistarasya me,* 'there is no end to My various manifestations in this world.' So, I will take a few samples and present them to you, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The idea of the glory of God manifested in the universe is a beautiful idea. High poetry has come out of that idea. High spiritual experience has come from that idea.

Earlier, I referred to Tennyson and Wordsworth. These two British poets were very much in touch with nature and through that they developed mystical experiences and they recorded it in their poems. This is another aspect. A poet's eye sees glory in this vast universe. Some divine glory is there. That is what they tried to express in poetic language. When Tennyson

says you go into ecstasy by seeing this glory around you, how does he express it? Before this mystery of the world, what am I? He answers:

> But what am I?
> An infant crying in the night;
> An infant crying for the light;
> And with no language but a cry.

What a beautiful expression! So, in all parts of the world you will find that, through art and poetry, you pierce this crust of the external world and see some powers of the Divine all over there. That is the nature of the artistic mind. All art is something that penetrates the external crust of nature. But in spiritual life and experience, it is a complete achievement. And none can compare with those great sages and seers who have achieved this. No artist can be compared to a person of great spiritual experience. You can see it for yourself.

A Buddha came. What happened? His life and example produced thousands of artists, thousands of writers, authors, etc. Similarly, a Jesus. How many bumper number of artists came forth to express the Christ-experience! That is their primacy. The greatest human being is that Divine Personality who gives inspiration to writers, artists, dramatists, to represent them in their own works. They are very rare in world's history.

That high poetry is the language Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses here. *Prādhānyataḥ kuruśreṣṭha nāstyanto vistarasya me,* 'My *vistāra,* My spread or pervasiveness in the world, there is no end to it'. It is infinite, you can say. I shall select a few sample manifestations for the purpose of your meditation, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. And the first manifestation that Kṛṣṇa presents before us is highly significant.

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।
अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥२०॥

Aham ātmā guḍākeśa sarva bhūtāśaya sthitaḥ;
Aham ādiśca madhyam ca bhūtānām anta eva ca — 10. 20

'I am the Self, O Guḍākeśa, existent in the heart of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle, and also the end of all beings.'

Beautiful! I am the Self hidden in the hearts of all beings in this world. Not in the heart of Hindus only! Or *Vaiṣṇavas* only! No; *in the heart of all beings*, I am the Self, like the thread that runs through a garland of pearls, making for the unity of the pearls. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa described in the *Gītā* earlier (7. 7): *Mayi sarvam idam protam sūtre maṇigaṇā iva.* So, here He says that, 'I am the Self, the Atman, in the heart of all beings.' *Guḍākeśa* is Arjuna's name. *Aham ātmā sarva bhūtāśaya sthitaḥ,* 'I am in the heart of all beings', ants, worms, animals, human beings. There is not anything in the world in the heart of which the Divine spark is not there. That is a supreme truth which can be highly appreciated by unprejudiced physical scientists today.

As I cited in the example given earlier, in this solar system, we can definitely say there is nothing that is not impregnated by solar radiation. Everything—stones, flowers, leaves, food, digestion—is irradiated by solar radiation. Similarly, the world has come from Brahman, who is of the nature of *satyam-jñānam-anantam,* as the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* said: 'Brahman is *satyam, jñānam, anantam*'; *yo veda nihitam guhāyām parame vyoman;* where shall you find Him? 'In your own heart', not somewhere in the skies, far away beyond the universe. *Nihitam,* 'hidden'; *guhāyām,* 'in the cavity of your heart'. *Nihitam,* 'hidden' and so, you have to *discover* it. That is why a little struggle is needed. *Parame vyoman,* 'in the innermost space of the heart', not on the surface, but in its depth. In many aspects of our literature, we find the concept of a cave. The whole inner life is like a cave in which this Atman is hidden. That is why, later on in our culture, these three, the Hindus, Jains, and the Buddhists, created so many caves everywhere. And you sit in a cave in meditation. The cave has a high value from that point of view. So, *parame vyoman,* 'in the supreme space of the heart', or the emptiness of the heart. The word *vyoma* means space; it also means the sky; it also means emptiness. What is space?, emptiness. That is the language: *parame vyoman* or supreme *vyoman.* That person, who so meditates, achieves the highest in this very life, said the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*. Similarly, here also it is said:

Aham ātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūtāśayasthitaḥ;
Aham ādiśca madhyam ca bhūtānām anta eva ca —

‘I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings in this world.’ That is the nature of the ultimate Reality. And repeating this point let me state that, the way Indian philosophy approaches this subject of cosmology can be perfectly acceptable to any astrophysicist of the modern period. They also trace everything to the one behind the many. Everything is here. But in the beginning it was undifferentiated; now it has become differentiated as the universe. That is astrophysics. That is also Vedanta. But the astrophysicist will call it ‘a material something’. Vedanta calls it Pure Consciousness, infinite and non-dual—*satyam jñānam anantam brahma,* ‘truth, knowledge or consciousness, and infinity—that is Brahman.’ Behind this universe *that* is the truth. That is why you see consciousness in you and me. If it were not there in the cause, how can it come in the effect? That is a wonderful argument today against materialism. So, many scientists also like this idea.

I am quoting Prof. Capra, the famous writer of *The Tao of Physics* where he says:

‘The Brahman of the Hindus, the *Dhammakāya* of the Buddhist, and the Tao of the Taoist, are more complete background realities of the universe than what physical science gives us today.’

Physical science explains only the material universe. What about the non-material aspect of the universe? They can’t explain it. But, we can explain both. Therefore, he said that this is the comprehensiveness of the Indian approach to the nature of the cosmos. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, ‘I am the Atman in the heart of all beings; I am the beginning, middle and end of all beings.’ From God we came, in God we exist, and to God we return, using the word God in the Vedantic sense of the term—not something extra-cosmic, but as the one primordial reality, as the infinite Consciousness, which has spread out in the vast universe in which you and I live. We are also parts of Itself. That is why there is complete oneness between us, even with nature outside. We are not separate; nature and we are part and parcel of the same Reality. So, we don’t destroy nature according to our philosophy. In the West it was different: dualistic attitude; so, you destroy nature, you treat it as an enemy to be conquered. We don’t accept that idea. And all those who speak of ecology today, they accept the Indian idea.

Nature is not something foreign to us. We are all part and parcel of that infinite whole. That is why this teaching becomes very very relevant.

What a tremendous truth it is! This is a vast universe; you look out and study the immensity of the universe before you. Perfectly true. But the immensity of the Self that is hidden within you is far far superior to any immensity of external nature. Our Voyager, American spacecraft, after passing past Neptune is going into the outer space now. That is a wonderful thing. You experience the infinite expanse of the universe. But compared to the truth that is hidden within you, these external things are nothing! And when men and women realize this truth, they know the true glory and greatness of the human being. Both in physical science and in Vedanta, we have this concept of the human being's uniqueness. This was a subject on which I spoke at the Sir C.V. Raman Institute in Bangalore on 2nd October —a Gandhi Memorial Lecture—'Man's Uniqueness in the Upaniṣads and in Modern Science'. The audience accepted it with great joy. It is a wonderful subject. Later, I gave two lectures—late nuclear scientist Vikram Sarabhai Memorial Lectures at Ahmedabad, as 'The Science of Human Uniqueness' which has been published as a booklet by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai. The first lecture deals with human uniqueness according to modern physical sciences and the second one on human uniqueness according to Vedanta. One continues in the other; there is no conflict. If men and women know this uniqueness, they will certainly behave better than the way many of them behave today. Today we misbehave in a thousand ways. But when we come to know this uniqueness, we will try to understand it, try to realize it in the course of our life and work.

That is the development that will come in the future in the wake of this great Vedantic teaching given by Swami Vivekananda—Practical Vedanta. Vedanta coming to the marketplace, Vedanta coming to the home, Vedanta coming to the offices—not merely sitting in the Himalayas in a monastic institution. That is why this teaching has profound significance for all people. Men and women have been upgraded to a high level. What looks like a tiny physical organism contains some profound dimension. That must be realized. And nature has given us the organic capacity to investigate and realize this truth. Use that capacity, don't waste it. That is the exhortation of Vedanta to all humanity: *Tamevaikam jānatha ātmānam, anyā vāco*

vimuñcatha; amṛtasya eṣa setuḥ. This is what the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* said (II. ii. 5): 'try to realize that one single truth, the Atman; give up all other vain talking; this is the bridge to immortality'. The 'bridge to immortality' is to realize this truth, 'I am the Atman', ever free, ever pure, ever enlightened. That is my true nature. What a beautiful idea! Even in the worst sinner, that Atman ever remains pure. Nothing can make it impure. Its very nature is purity. This is the great view, elevated view of man and woman given in Vedanta. In no other literature will you find this view. That is why *ātmajñāna,* 'knowledge of the Atman', is the greatest thing that we can aspire for. Then, Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues:

आदित्यानामहं विष्णुर्ज्योतिषां रविरंशुमान् ।
मरीचिर्मरुतामस्मि नक्षत्राणामहं शशी ॥२१॥

Ádityānām aham viṣṇuḥ jyotiṣām raviramśumān;
Marīciḥ marutām asmi nakṣatrāṇām aham śaśī— 10. 21

'Of the *Ádityas,* I am Viṣṇu; of luminaries, the radiant Sun; of the winds I am Marīci; of the asterisms, the Moon.'

These are enumeration from nature and from our own theology. Various entities are there; things are chosen and presented by Śrī Kṛṣṇa. So, the first is, *ādityānām aham viṣṇuḥ,* 'among the *Ádityas—āditya* is the Sanskrit word for sun—I am Viṣṇu.' There are twelve *Ádityas,* and Viṣṇu is one of the twelve *Ádityas.* 'I am Viṣṇu among the *Ádityas*'. And *jyotiṣām raviramśumān,* 'among the luminaries, I am the radiant sun.' *Marīciḥ marutām asmi*, 'of the winds, I am Marīci'. These are all various terms in our theology. *Nakṣatrāṇām aham śaśī*, 'of asterisms, I am the moon'. Among the many planets that are there, I am the moon, because in the night sky, the moon shines bright.

वेदानां सामवेदोऽस्मि देवानामस्मि वासवः ।
इन्द्रियाणां मनश्चास्मि भूतानामस्मि चेतना ॥२२॥

Vedānām sāma vedo'smi devānām asmi vāsavaḥ;
Indriyāṇām manaścāsmi bhūtānām asmi cetanā — 10. 22

'I am the *Sāma Veda* of the Vedas, and Vāsava (Indra) of the gods; of the senses, I am the mind; and intelligence among living beings am I.'

Vedānām sāma vedo'smi, 'among the Vedas, I am *Sāma Veda*'. That is very interesting. In other places, *Ṛg Veda* or *Yajur Veda* is given prominence. Here *Sāma Veda* is given prominence. And, in fact, in the *Manu Smṛti* it is mentioned that the speech of *Sāma Veda* is impure. Here, *Sāma Veda* is highly praised! The best explanation of this difficult statement is given by Lokamanya Tilak in his *Gītā Rahasya,* second volume, where he says that the *bhakti* religion places great emphasis on *bhajan*, on music; so, among the Vedas, *Sāma Veda* is musical. The basis of Indian music is *Sāma Veda*. Naturally, the *Nārayaṇīya* section of the *Mahābhārata*, which concerns with *bhakti,* upholds the concept of *bhakti* and *bhajan.* And here, therefore, that *bhajan* idea comes prominently to make *Sāma Veda* the pre-eminent Veda.

Devānām asmi vāsavaḥ, 'among all the *devas,* I am Vāsava, that is, Indra, the Lord of the *devas*.' *Indriyāṇām manaścāsmi,* 'among the sense-organs, I am the *manas*'. Now, *manas* is a very unique entity in the psycho-physical system. We have the five sense-organs of seeing, hearing, etc. The sixth sense-organ is *manas,* which is not mind in its full state, but mind in its initial state; the indecisive state of mind is called by Swami Vivekananda as *manas.* When you see a thing, you begin to think, 'is it this?', or 'is it that?' That *saṅkalpa-vikalpātmikā* state of mind is called *manas* in Sanskrit. And *manas* is treated therefore as one of the sense-organs, a little more refined, which can coordinate the activities of the other five sense-organs. *Bhūtānam asmi cetanā*, 'the principle of intelligence, I am, among all the beings'. *Cetanā* or *caitanya* means intelligence, capacity to know, experience, etc.

रुद्राणां शङ्करश्चास्मि वित्तेशो यक्षरक्षसाम् ।
वसूनां पावकश्चास्मि मेरुः शिखरिणामहम् ॥२३॥

Rudrāṇām śaṅkaraścāsmi vitteśo yakṣarakṣasām
Vasūnām pāvakaścāsmi meruḥ śikhariṇāmaham — 10. 23

‘Among the *Rudras*, I am Śaṅkara; of the *Yakṣas* and *Rākṣasas*, I am the Lord of wealth, that is, Kubera; of the *Vasus,* I am Pāvaka; and among mountains, Meru am I.’

Rudrāṇām śaṅkaraścāsmi, ‘among the *Rudras* I am Śaṅkara, Śiva’. Now, these are all words with Vedic background. They have different meanings when you come to the later *Purāṇas.* But in the earlier stages, so many *Rudras* are mentioned in the Vedas. And Śaṅkara is one *Rudra* in that sense only. *Vitteśo yakṣarakṣasām,* ‘among all the *Yakṣas* and *Rākṣasas*, I am Kubera, *vitteśa,* “the lord of wealth”.’ *Vasūnām pāvakaścāsmi,* ‘among all the *Vasus*, a type of high beings, I am Pāvaka, meaning fire.’ *Meruḥ śikhariṇām aham,* ‘and among the mountains, I am Meru’. The Meru is a mythical mountain round which the whole universe moves; that is a concept in our mythology.

पुरोधसां च मुख्यं मां विद्धि पार्थ बृहस्पतिम् ।
सेनानीनामहं स्कन्दः सरसामस्मि सागरः ॥२४॥

Purodhasām ca mukhyam mām viddhi pārtha bṛhaspatim;
Senānināmaham skandaḥ sarasāmasmi sāgaraḥ — 10. 24

‘And of priests, O son of Pṛthā, know Me as the chief, Bṛhaspati; of generals, I am Skanda; of bodies of water, I am the ocean.’

Mām viddhi, ‘consider Me’; *bṛhaspatim,* ‘as *Bṛhaspati’; purodhasām ca mukhyam,* ‘the chief among the priests of the divine order’. Bṛhaspati is a great priest. I am he. *Senānīnām aham skandaḥ,* ‘among the generals I am *Skanda’.* Subrahmaṇya is a great general. In fact, it was for his birth that we had poet Kālidās’s *Kumārasambhava* depicting the story of Śiva marrying Pārvati out of which came Skanda or Kārtikeya. He is called the general of the *devas. Sāgaraḥ,* ‘among the reservoirs of water I am the ocean’, infinite, expansive.

महर्षीणां भृगुरहं गिरामस्म्येकमक्षरम् ।
यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि स्थावराणां हिमालयः ॥२५॥

Maharṣīṇām bhṛguraham girām asmi ekam akṣaram;
Yajñānām japayajño‘smi sthāvarāṇām himālayaḥ — 10. 25

‘Of the great *ṛṣis,* I am Bhṛgu; of words, I am the one syllable Om; of *Yajñas* I am the *Yajña* of *Japa* (silent repetition); of immovable things, the Himalaya.’

Maharṣīṇām bhṛguraham, ‘among all the *maharṣis*, I am Bhṛgu’. In the Vedas you will find Bhṛgu, so also in the *Purāṇas,* one who was of very high status. So, among all the *maharṣis,* I am Bhṛgu. *Girām asmi ekam akṣaram,* ‘among all words or speech, I am that single letter called Om’. *Yajñānām japayajño‘smi.* That is very interesting. ‘Among all the *yajñas* or sacrifices, I am *japa yajña*’, repetition or Lord’s name. What a beautiful status you get for *japa!* You may have *Aśvamedha, agnihotra,* and various types of sacrifices, *koṭi arcanas,* which people talk of today. These are all *yajñas.* But the greatest *yajña* is *japa yajña,* ‘repeating the Lord’s name’. So, among all *yajñas,* I am *japa. Sthāvarāṇām himālayaḥ,* ‘among the immovable things of the world, I am the Himalayas’. *Sthāvara* and *jaṅgama* —the world has two types of things: one moving (*jaṅgama*), the other unmoving (*sthāvara*). Among the unmoving, I am the Himalayas.

अश्वत्थः सर्ववृक्षाणां देवर्षीणां च नारदः ।
गन्धर्वाणां चित्ररथः सिद्धानां कपिलो मुनिः ॥२६॥

Aśvatthaḥ sarva vṛkṣāṇām devarṣīṇām ca nāradaḥ;
Gandharvāṇām citrarathaḥ siddhānām kapilo muniḥ—10. 26

‘Of all trees, I am Aśvattha, and Nārada among *devarṣis;* Citraratha among *Gandharvas* am I; and the *muni* Kapila among the perfected ones.’

Aśvatthaḥ sarva vṛkṣāṇām, ‘among all the trees, I am the pepul tree’. Aśvattha is a very holy tree. In the fifteenth chapter of this *Gītā,* you will get the world described as an aśvattha tree with roots upwards. That is there in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* also. So, that tree has become very sacred in India. Even before Buddha appeared, it was a sacred tree. Buddha sat under it and became spiritually enlightened, and this gave it a further sacredness. So, it is called *bodhi drumam,* ‘the Tree of *Bodhi,* Illumination’. That is why people go around that tree. In many parts of India you will find that this aśvattha tree is held very sacred by people.

Devarṣīṇām ca nāradaḥ, ‘among the *devarṣis,* I am Nārada’. There are three types of *ṛṣis—devarṣi, brahmarṣi* and *rājarṣi. Rājaṛṣi* is a person holding political power, but deeply spiritual—handling power for the good of all. Any politician, administrator, collector, any one of them, if he or she is spiritual and works for the good of the people, such a one is called a *rājarṣi. Rājānaśca te ṛṣayaśca,* ‘king and sage in one’, says Śaṅkarācārya, as I have mentioned in the fourth chapter. *Brahmaṛṣi* are *brāhmaṇas* who become great sages. And Nārada is a *devaṛṣi.* Three types of *ṛṣis* you find in our literature.

Gandharvāṇām citrarathaḥ, ‘among all the *gandharvas*—they are divine musicians—I am Citraratha, one of the important *gandharvas.’ Siddhānām kapilo muniḥ,* ‘among the *siddhas*, spiritually perfect beings, I am Kapila, the great sage’. Kapila is highly praised in our literature as the father of philosophy, the father of psychology; that is Kapila, a sage of high spiritual development. That is the nature of Kapila. So, ‘whatever Kapila says, is sacred’ is an utterance in the Vedas. So, Kapila is mentioned here. So many Kapilas are mentioned in our literature, and we don’t know whether they are the same. We don’t have historical descriptions of these Kapilas. But the Kapila who created the Sāṅkhya philosophy, the Kapila who taught his mother, Devahūti, as given in the *Bhāgavatam,* Book III—they are all highly developed beings, spiritual. They knew the depth of the human being. So, Kapila’s status is very very high. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, therefore, ‘among all the sages, I am Kapila’.

उच्चैःश्रवसमश्वानां विद्धि माममृतोद्भवम् ।
ऐरावतं गजेन्द्राणां नराणां च नराधिपम् ॥२७॥

Uccaiḥśravasam aśvānām viddhi mām amṛtodbhavam;
Airāvatam gajendrāṇām narāṇām ca narādhipam — 10. 27

‘Know Me among horses as Uccaiḥśravas, *amṛta*-born; among lordly elephants, (I am) Airāvata; and also of human beings, the king.’

Uccaiḥśravasam aśvānām. When the *samudramanthan,* ‘churning of the ocean’, by gods, demons and men took place, various things came out including Danvantari, the great science of medicine. This also came out,

namely, Ucchaiḥśravas, the horse. ‘I am the Ucchaiḥśravas which came out of this churning of the ocean of nectar’, *amṛta*-born. Similarly, elephants and so many other things also came out at that time. Among *aśvas* or ‘horses’, I am Ucchaiḥśravas that came out of the *samudramanthan. Viddhi mām amṛtodbhavam,* ‘know Me to be *amṛta*-born’. *Airāvataḥ gajendrāṇām,* ‘Among all the *gajendras,* royal elephants, I am Airāvata’. Similarly, *narāṇām ca narādhipam,* ‘among human beings, I am the ruler of humanity, the king’. In the king, or his equivalent in different political systems, all power rests. He has got a special status in society. Therefore, ‘I am the *narādhipa* among the *naras.*’ In fact, it is said that a king gets a small portion of whatever good his citizens do, whatever meditations they do, whatever spiritual practices they do, because he protects society, keeps up law and order, etc., so that his subjects can live peacefully. That is how the word king or *narādhipa* came into use. Today, it means sovereignty; he may not be a crowned individual. Crowned individuals are getting less and less. But, sovereignty continues. Sovereigns go away, sovereignty continues. When the British left India, the sovereign left. But sovereignty did not go. Sovereignty came to the new republic which we established in this country with a President as the symbol of that sovereignty. And every citizen also is a sovereign in a democracy and a republic.

आयुधानामहं वङ्कां धेनूनामस्मि कामधुक् ।
प्रजनश्चास्मि कन्दर्पः सर्पाणामस्मि वासुकिः ॥२८॥

Áyudhānām aham vajram dhenūnām asmi kāmadhuk;
Prajanaśca asmi kandarpaḥ sarpāṇām asmi vāsukiḥ—10. 28

‘Of weapons, I am the thunderbolt; of cows, I am Kāmadhuk; I am the Kandarpa among the cause of offspring; of serpents, I am Vāsuki.’

Áyudhānām aham vajram, ‘among the various weapons, I am *vajra* the thunderbolt’, that tremendous weapon created for Indra. *Dhenūnām asmi kāmadhuk,* ‘among the cows, I am the Kāmadhenu’; whatever wish you want to be accomplished, that cow will help you to accomplish it. That is a mythical cow. *Prajanaśca asmi kandarpaḥ,* ‘for generating new generations of men and women, I am Kandarpa, the God of Love’, that famous Eros as

we call it in Western language. *Sarpāṇām asmi vāsukiḥ,* ‘I am Vāsuki among the serpents’.

अनन्तश्चास्मि नागानां वरुणो यादसामहम् ।
पितॄणामर्यमा चास्मि यमः संयमतामहम् ॥२९॥

Anantaścāsmi nāgānām varuṇo yādasām aham;
Pitçṇām aryamā cāsmi yamaḥ samyamatām aham — 10. 29

‘And Ananta among snakes am I; I am Varuṇa among water-beings; and Aryaman among *pitṛs* am I; I am Yama among controllers.’

Among the two types—one is the serpent and the other is the snake—I am, among the *nāgas* or snakes, Ananta on which Viṣṇu rests. *Varuṇo yādasām aham,* ‘those who live by water, I am Varuṇa among them’. *Pitçṇām aryamā cāsmi,* ‘among the *pitṛs* I am Aryama’. *Pitṛ* means ‘dead ancestors’. Among them Aryama is one of the gods mentioned in the Vedas. *Yamaḥ samyamatām aham,* ‘among those who control, regulate and discipline, I am Yama, the god of death’. Yama, *Kāla,* Death, all these are commonly used. We say Kāla is Yama. Why? Time regulates everything. And all are subject to time. Nobody can transcend time. So, I am that Yama among regulating things.

प्रह्लादश्चास्मि दैत्यानां कालः कलयतामहम् ।
मृगाणां च मृगेन्द्रोऽहं वैनतेयश्च पक्षिणाम् ॥३०॥

Prahlādaścāsmi daityānām kālaḥ kalayatām aham;
Mṛgāṇām ca mṛgendro’ham vainateyaśca pakṣiṇām—10. 30

‘And Prahlāda am I among Diti’s progeny; of measures, I am Time; and of beasts, I am the lord of beasts, the lion; and Garuḍa among birds.’

Prahlādaścāsmi daityānām, ‘among the *daityas* or *asuras*, I am Prahlāda’, the greatest devotee of God among *mānavas* or human beings, *asuras,* and *devas.* Among all of them, Prahlāda stands supreme. So, I am the Prahlāda among the *daityas. Kālaḥ kalayatām aham,* ‘among those that regulate and measure things, I am Time’. We measure everything by time. Everything is subject to Time. *Kālabhuktam,* ‘eaten by time or Kāla’—that

is the language used in the *Mahābhārata*. *Mṛgāṇām ca mṛgendro'ham,* 'among the animals, I am the Lord of the beasts', that is, the lion. *Vainateyaśca pakṣiṇām,* 'among the *pakṣis* or birds, I am Garuḍa, *vainateya*'. Garuḍa is highly respected in our tradition.

पवनः पवतामस्मि रामः शस्त्रभृतामहम् ।
झषाणां मकरश्चास्मि स्रोतसामस्मि जाह्नवी ॥३१॥

Pavanaḥ pavatām asmi rāmaḥ śastrabhṛtām aham;
Jhaṣāṇām makarścāsmi srotasām asmi jāhnavī — 10. 31

'Of purifiers, I am the wind; Rāma among warriors am I; of fishes I am the shark; of streams, I am Jāhnavi (the Ganga).'

Pavanaḥ pavatām asmi, 'of things that purify I am *pavana* or the wind'. Wind purifies, clears up everything. That is why we want the windows open. We want a little purifying air. *Rāmaḥ śastrabhṛtām aham,* 'I am Rāma among all warriors who hold weapons', i.e. Daśaratha's son Śrī Rāma. *Jhaṣāṇām makarścāsmi,* 'among all the fishes, I am the shark, *makara*.' *Srotasām asmi jāhnavī,* 'among flowing waters, I am the Ganga, Jāhnavi.' What a beautiful expression!

सर्गाणामादिरन्तश्च मध्यं चैवाहमर्जुन ।
अध्यात्मविद्या विद्यानां वादः प्रवदतामहम् ॥३२॥

Sargāṇām ādirantaśca madhyam caivāham arjuna;
Adhyātmavidyā vidyānām vādaḥ pravadatām aham—10. 32

'Of manifestations, I am the beginning, the middle and also the end; of all types of knowledge, I am the knowledge of the Self; and *Vāda* among disputations.'

Sargāṇām, 'of the projection, maintenance, and dissolution of the universe'; *sarga* means creation. But Vedanta does not accept creation in the sense of something coming out of nothing. From Brahman the world comes out; so, we call it projection. That is the English word for *sṛṣṭi* in Sanskrit. *Sṛj* means to project. Not creation. Of this projected universe, *ādi, anta* and *madhya*, 'beginning, end and middle', am I. I am the beginning,

the middle and the end of this whole projected universe. Then, *vidyānām*, 'among the sciences'; *adhyātma vidyā,* 'I am *adhyātma vidyā'.* This is another wonderful statement. There are many sciences. *Vidyā* means science. It means knowledge. And in English, science means knowledge and nothing else. Precise knowledge, which we can verify and communicate, is called science. So, *vidyā,* knowledge or science all mean the same thing; we speak of all of them as *vidyās.* Among the *vidyās,* there are many: *rasāyana vidyā* or chemistry, *bhūta vidyā* or physics, etc. Beyond these is *adhyātma vidyā* or the science of spirituality. Among all the sciences this is the pre-eminent science according to Vedanta—the science of human being in depth, the science of human possibilities, the Science of sciences. What is the use of knowing all about things? You don't know anything about yourself! That is the idea. So, among all the sciences, I am *adhyātma vidyā.* If you translate it merely as religion, then it will rather look ridiculous. Among all the sciences, religion is the supreme science. That doesn't carry any conviction today, because religions of the world, Swami Vivekananda said, have become lifeless mockeries (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 7, p. 501). But when you speak of *adhyātma vidyā,* you recognize a profound dimension in this human being which creates all these physical sciences. The human being is unique and supreme. That is slowly coming to the understanding of modern physical science. The uniqueness of the human being, the one who creates physical sciences, naturally is superior to physical science. Therefore, the science that gives the knowledge of the human being is truly a supreme science. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *adhyātma vidyā vidyānām,* 'among all the sciences, I am *adhyātma vidyā'.* This will be understood and accepted probably sometime in the next century. The physical sciences are moving in that direction. There is no other way. After you finish studying the external world, what are you going to study? You can study the world in more detail, that is all. Major studies are over because you cannot go deeper into the world than what you have gone. The whole of that study, Vedanta calls the world of *dṛśyam,* 'the seen', 'the object'. What about 'the seer', 'the observer', the *dṛk*? There, modern physical science will have to follow the footprints of India's ancient and ever fresh Vedanta.

Some years ago, I read an article in the Siemen's Journal—Siemen is a great German firm of X-ray. *Electromedica* was the name of the journal. There, a scientist has written a wonderful article. He says that the modern age started as a major work of exploration. We explored the world around, first sending our ships to the Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean, finding out various parts of the earth. Then we went to the north pole, then the south pole. Then we went into the ocean, to explore the depth of the ocean. Then we climbed Mount Everest and the Alps also. All this we did. Still we were restless. We wanted to explore more and more. Then we started sending rockets up into the sky. The first rockets went only fifty or sixty miles and fell down. Then slowly we developed powerful rockets and one went round circling the earth. Then, later on, we landed on the moon. And now, Voyager-II is going beyond the solar system!

Having said all this, the writer says that there is one exploration waiting to be undertaken by our men and women, namely, the hinterland of our own consciousness. What is behind this mind? What is behind this knowing process? What is the knower behind the known? That is waiting for you.

And *that* science is what India developed ages ago in the Upaniṣads. *Adhyātma vidyā* means that. Behind the body, behind the senses, behind the mind, we discovered the infinite Atman—ever pure, ever free, infinite in dimension. That is the supreme truth. *Tattvamasi, tattvamasi,* 'you are That, you are That', is the message of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* on this subject. So, based upon that, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling here: *Adhyātmavidyā vidyānām*. The modern world will accept this idea within a short time. Everything is going in that direction. The dilemma of men and women today is that the one who created a highly technical civilization has become a *creature* of that civilization, suffering from that civilization! What a poor state of humanity! Is there nothing else in men and women to make them the master of the whole show? When this question is taken up seriously, and it is being pressed upon the mind of men and women today, human beings will be driven to this wonderful science—the science of human beings in depth, not the surface human being. The human being revealed by the senses is a very truncated creature in the whole of creation. But behind that is a great reality, a great dimension. That is what the Upaniṣadic sages and seers tried to understand and succeeded in expounding it to humanity as an eternal

message, a *Sanātana Dharma.* There is only one thing that is *sanātana,* eternal, and that is the infinite Atman. Everything else is subject to change. The whole world is subject to change. Sun and stars are all subject to time, subject to change. There is only one thing *sanātana,* 'eternal'; that is the Atman, the infinite Self behind all of us. So, that is the direction in which all sciences move today, gently but steadily. And Western psychology and neurology are going faster in that direction. We can expect great developments in the next century. And, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here, 'among all the sciences, I am the science of the Atman.'

Pravadana means discussion, disputation, argument. There are, in our study of logic in India, three types of *pravadana.* When you discuss a subject with somebody, you can do it in three ways. They are called *vāda,* second, *jalpa,* and third comes *vitaṇḍa.* What a wonderful classification! In *vāda,* your objective is to find out the truth. So, you are discussing a subject with the motivation of finding truth. You are calm, quiet, and never getting into heated arguments. Such an argument is called *vāda;* what sciences do, also what is done in high spiritual life, that is called *vāda.* The second is *jalpa,* in which you forget the purpose for which you started your discussion. You want to get victory over your opponent without making an honest attempt to arrive at truth. And when it comes to *vitaṇḍa,* you try to win simply by refuting the others' position. You are not interested in the truth. You are only fighting with words. It is something like our democratic State and Union politics today—less *vāda,* and more of *jalpa* and *vitaṇḍa.* A Parliament is where one is supposed to engage oneself in *vāda.* We discuss with a view to doing good to the nation. That is the purpose of discussion in a democracy. That we forgot, and we got into *jalpa* and *vitaṇḍa.* Now we have to return to *vāda* once again since democracy is governance by discussion.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'among all these disputation methods, I am the first one, *vāda.*' If you are engaged in *vāda,* Śrī Kṛṣṇa is present there. In a Parliament, the Lord is present, if they discuss with a view to arriving at truth, and ensure the happiness and welfare of the people. This is the meaning of the statement, 'among all these disputation methods, I am *vāda.*'

अक्षराणामकारोऽस्मि द्वन्द्वः सामासिकस्य च ।
अहमेवाक्षयः कालो धाताहं विश्वतोमुखः ॥३३॥

Akṣarāṇām akāro'smi dvandvaḥ sāmāsikasya ca;
Ahamevākṣayaḥ kālo dhātāham viśvatomukhaḥ — 10. 33

'Of letters, I am the letter A; and *dvandva* among all compounds; I alone am the inexhaustible Time; I am the Sustainer (by dispensing the fruits of actions), and the All-formed.'

Akṣarāṇām akāro'smi, 'among all the alphabets, I am *A;* in Sanskrit, it is the first letter, अ.' The first letter that the mouth can produce, the first sound is *A,* as heard in the word, *assurance,* because it comes from the deepest level in the throat. In Sanskrit, it is *a-kāra.* In Sanskrit, 'A' is not the first letter. 'A' in Sanskrit is, ए; it is the seventh letter. अ is the first letter. All *akṣaras* or alphabets come from *A,* i.e. अ, as the beginning. *Dvandvaḥ sāmāsikasya ca.* When you combine two words, we get what you call *samāsa* in Sanskrit, combination of words. In Sanskrit, there are three or four *samāsas,* of which *dvandva* means one word is added to another word. Say, *Rāma plus Kṛṣṇa*, how do you call it?, *Rāmakṛṣṇau.* That is called *dvandva samāsa.* Similarly, all other aspects of this *samāsa* system. This is a part of Sanskrit grammar where you combine words; the last portion of the first word, and the first portion of the second word undergo minor changes. That is what is determined both in *sandhi* as well as in *samāsa.* Another *samāsa* is the *bahuvrīhi samāsa.* Yet another is called *tatpuruṣa.* Very interesting *samāsas* they are. *Bahuvrīhi* means *anyapadārtha pradhāno bahuvrīhiḥ,* 'in *bahuvrīhi samāsa,* the meaning is something other than the two words combined.' The other is *tatpuruṣa,* meaning 'exactly of it'. A person met a king; the king did not know Sanskrit. So, he sang a Sanskrit verse for the king. He said, *aham ca tvam ca rājendra, lokanāthau ubhauvapi,* 'O king, I and you are both *lokanāthas,* masters of the world.' That is the real meaning of *lokanātha.* The king became angry. He alone is *lokanātha,* not the other man. But the second line clarified it: *Bahuvrīhi samāso'ham, ṣaṣṭhī tatpuruṣo bhavān. Bahuvrīhi samāso'ham,* 'I am *lokanātha* in the *bahuvrīhi samāsa.' Bahuvrīhiḥ* is *anya padārtha pradhāno.* So, according to *bahuvrīhi,* the meaning of *lokanātha*

is *loko yasya nāthaḥ sa lokanāthaḥ.* '*Loka* is my master', I am not the master! That is called *lokanātha* according to *bahuvrīhi.* And the meaning of *lokanātha* according to *ṣaṣṭhi tatpuruṣa* is *lokasya nāthaḥ lokanāthaḥ,* 'you are the Lord of the world'. 'Therefore', he said, 'you are *tatpuruṣa,* I am bahuvrīhi.' 'Both are *lokanātha,*' he said. In Sanskrit you can make many such funny and beautiful combinations. And so these are the *samāsas —bahuvrīhi, tatpuruṣa* and *dvandva. Dvandva* is usually used as in *rāmaśca kṛṣṇaśca rāmakṛṣṇau.* You can mix up like that; the two combine together. So that is why that *au* will come in dual number *rāmakṛṣṇau.* Similarly other words also. It is called *dvandva,* because it combines *a, b* and *c.* Therefore, He (Lord) is one who unites people with each other. In the sense of 'uniting principle', He is *dvandva among samāsas.*

Aham eva akṣayaḥ kālo, 'I alone am inexhaustible Time'. Time goes on flowing, flowing; as far as you look forward, time is there; as far as you look backward, time is there. This flow of time is something very impressive. It is only a little civilized human being who can recognize the importance of time. When we were primitive, we were acted upon by time. We couldn't comprehend time. But, we studied time when we became a little more cultured. And therefore, India has spent a lot of time to understand the nature of time. Modern science is also trying to understand the nature of time, and that is how Einstein combined space and time into a space-time continuum. The whole world is nothing but space-time continuum. You can't separate space from time. A united space-time is the reality today, and every thing in that space-time is an *event*, not a thing or an entity. When you understand space-time as a continuum, entities vanish; only events remain. Everything becomes an event—just like a cinema picture. So many small small entities are put together and given time as the background. That time movement converts all entities into events. Time combined with the three dimensions of space is the reality of the world, the four-dimensional continuum according to Einstein's relativity theory. The arrow of time goes onwards, onwards. It can go on endlessly. Śrī Kṛṣṇa calls it therefore: *aham eva akṣayaḥ kālo,* 'I am this *akṣyaḥ* or endless *kāla* or time'. *Kālo 'smi,* 'I am *kāla*', He will say in the eleventh chapter; I have come to consume everything here. The whole world will be consumed by Time. *Kālo sarvasya bhoktāḥ,* is a statement: 'Time eats up everything in

the world'. Nothing will be left out; that is the primordial nature of Time, the tremendous reality. Further, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here, *dhātāham viśvato mukham,* I am also 'the sustainer, *dhātā,* with face turned towards all sides.'

मृत्युः सर्वहरश्चाहमुद्भवश्च भविष्यताम ।
कीर्तिः श्रीर्वाक्च नारीणां स्मृतिर्मेधा धृतिः क्षमा ॥३४॥

Mṛtyuḥ sarva haraścāham udbhavaśca bhaviṣyatām;
Kīrtiḥ śrīḥ vāk ca nārīṇām smṛtiḥ medhā dhṛtiḥ kṣamā—10. 34

'And I am the all-consuming Death; and the prosperity of those who are to be prosperous; of women, I am fame, prosperity, speech, memory, intelligence, endurance and patience.'

Again comes the word *mṛtyu;* the only difference between *kāla* and *mṛtyu* is that when you speak of *kāla* you are unemotional; when you speak about *mṛtyu,* you become emotional because it directly concerns you. That is called death. Everyday we are dying; we are not worried about it. But we are afraid of a final death. So, *mṛtyu* comes to you as a final act of *kāla. Mṛtyuḥ sarvaharaḥ ca aham,* 'I am death which swallows up everything'. Similarly, in the language of *bhakti* we say, those who touch the feet of the Lord, are not touched by death. That is a wonderful statement by Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mother, Devakī, in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* regarding Śrī Kṛṣṇa who was born of her in Kamsa's prison. There you will find Devakī's hymn to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, her own son, but as a divine form lying before her. Among the verses of the hymn is one such on death. *Mṛtyuḥ sarvaharaścāham,* 'I am death which consumes everything', except anyone who is at the feet of the divine. That is the statement of Devakī in that hymn of praise (X. iii. 27):

Martyo mṛtyuvyālabhītaḥ palāyan
lokān sarvān nirbhayam nādhyagacchat;
Tvat pādābjam prāpya yadṛcchayādya
Svasthaḥ śete mṛtyurasmād apaiti —

She is telling, pointing to baby Śrī Kṛṣṇa with her own hand: 'As soon as the mortal being is born, death is after him or her, chasing everyone. Everyone wants to escape it.' One eats, gets education, gets a job, marries, does good work, even goes to heaven. Why? To avoid death. 'But death is

always behind everyone', closely following everyone, going to consume that person. In this way a human being becomes restless. *Martyaḥ mṛtyuvyālabhītaḥ,* 'a mortal fearing the *mṛtyuvyāla*'; *mṛtyu* is compared to a snake, *vyāla,* creeping towards us. People generally 'fear', *bhītaḥ,* things creeping towards them. Here death is a creeping thing. *Palāyan,* 'one runs away'. Figuratively one runs away from that *mṛtyu*-snake chasing him or her. *Sarvān lokān,* 'goes to all parts of the world, even to higher worlds'. *Nirbhayam nādhyagacchat,* 'nowhere does he or she get security and peace'. *Tvad pādābjam prāpya yadṛcchayā adya,* 'but, getting, by chance, a place at Your lotus feet', O Kṛṣṇa, then *mṛtyu* cannot enter that magic circle. *Mṛtyu* comes nearby and 'quietly retreats', *mṛtyurasmād apaiti; svasthaḥ śete,* 'leaving you in peace'. That is the divine Person that You are; that is the language Devakī uses there.

So, this infinite Atman is the only centre where *mṛtyu* cannot come. Everything else is subject to *mṛtyu.* This has been repeated again and again in the Upaniṣads. *Sarvam anyat ārtam,* 'everything else is subject to death, full of sorrow and suffering'. This alone is free from suffering, from death etc. You find it repeated again and again. 'Those who see differences here, they go from death to death; those who see the One behind the many, they alone become immortal', is the language used in the Upaniṣads again and again. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'I am *mṛtyu* consuming everything in this world'.

Udbhavaśca bhaviṣyatām. What is prosperity? I am that *udbhava,* prosperity, of those who are to be prosperous. This person is going to be prosperous; I am behind him or her as the principle of prosperity. *Kīrtiḥ śrīrvākca nārīṇām smṛtirmedhā dhṛtiḥ kṣamā:* In women there are so many beautiful virtues and graces. Śrī Kṛṣṇa relates a few of these and says, I am these. What are they? *Kīrti,* 'good name'; *śrī,* 'prosperity'; *vāk,* 'sweet speech'; *smṛtiḥ,* 'memory'; *medhā,* 'intelligence', the capacity to understand things; *dhṛtiḥ,* 'tremendous endurance'; *kṣamā,* 'patience'. These various virtues in women am I, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa in this verse.

The Divine is not only transcendent but also immanent. That is the main theme of this and the next chapter.

बृहत्साम तथा साम्नां गायत्री छन्दसामहम् ।
मासानां मार्गशीर्षोऽहमृतूनां कुसुमाकरः ॥३५॥

Bṛhatsāma tathā sāmnām gāyatrī chandasām aham;
Māsānām mārgaśīrṣo'ham ṛtūnām kusumākaraḥ — 10. 35

'Of *Sāmas* also, I am the *Bṛhat Sāma;* of metres, Gāyatrī am I; of months, I am *Mārgaśīrṣa;* of seasons, the flowery seasons.'

Bṛhatsāma tathā sāmnām, 'among the *sāmagānas,* songs of the *Sāma Veda*, I am the *Bṛhat Sāma*'—one of the items of the *Sāma Veda. Gāyatrī chandasām aham*, 'and among all the metres, Vedic metres, poetic metres, I am Gāyatrī'. Gāyatrī is an oft-occurring metre in the Vedas. *Om tat savitur vareṇyam, bhargo devasya dhīmahi, dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt;* this three-line kind of poetry is called Gāyatrī in *chandas. Chandas* means this kind of expression in Vedic poetry. Various forms of *chandas* there are in Sanskrit as well as in English and in all the languages. This is one such, which is not very current today. In the Vedic literature you get it. *Māsānām mārgaśīrṣo'ham,* 'among the months, I am *Mārgaśīrṣa,* December-January, from the middle of December to the middle of January.' It is also called *Agrahāyaṇa;* during the period of *Mahābhārata,* the year was started from *Mārgaśīrṣa,* or *Agrahāyaṇa,* the beginning of the year. *Mārgaśīrṣa* is a very sacred month even today in India. *Ṛtūnām kusumākaraḥ,* 'among the seasons, I am spring'. The language used here is, that season when flowers sprout in nature, *kusumākaraḥ. Kusuma* is flower. After the death of nature in winter, in spring the whole nature bursts out in beauty and charm. That is why spring is always highly appreciated in poetry. So, I am that spring among all the seasons; *kusumākaraḥ.* They also call it *Vasanta* in Sanskrit; *vasanta ṛtu. Ṛtu* is the Sanskrit word for 'season'.

द्यूतं छलयतामस्मि तेजस्तेजस्विनामहम् ।
जयोऽस्मि व्यवसायोऽस्मि सत्त्वं सत्त्ववतामहम् ॥३६॥

Dyūtam chalayatām asmi tejastejasvinām aham;
Jayo'smi vyavasāyo'smi sattvam sattvavatām aham —10. 36

‘I am the gambling of the fraudulent; I am the power of the powerful; I am victory; I am effort; I am *Sattva* of the *sāttvika.*’

It is interesting. *Dyūtam chalayatām asmi.* I am *dyutam,* that kind of play of gambling. You have in *Mahābhārata* cheating in gambling done by Śakuni. And so, I am the gambling of the gambler, the deceitfulness of the gambler. Many people, specially those who are of the monotheistic attitude, cannot appreciate this thing. Their God is separate from this universe. But, in India God is not separate from the universe. From God the universe has come. So, there is nothing supernatural in Indian thought. Therefore, whatever happens here is an expression of the Divine. I repeatedly gave the example of the sun. Solar energy is condensed into all the things on this earth. Good, bad, indifferent, everything is solar energy. The dirt here is also solar energy. And therefore, a unifying philosophy will have to accept not only the good but also the bad as expression of the same reality. So, from that point of view, *dyūtam chalayatām asmi,* as also *tejas tejasvinām aham,* ‘those who are brilliant, I am that brilliance in them’. *Jayo’smi,* ‘I am victory’ of the victorious; *vyavasāyo’smi,* ‘I am the determined effort of those who have that attitude’; *sattvam sattvavatām aham,* ‘among those who are calm and steady, the *sāttvik* type, I am that *sattva*’. *Sattva* is what gives calmness, the balanced attitude. There are three states of mind: *sāttvik, rājasik,* and *tāmasik.*

वृष्णीनां वासुदेवोऽस्मि पाण्डवानां धनञ्जयः ।
मुनीनामप्यहं व्यासः कवीनामुशना कविः ॥३७॥

Vṛṣṇīnām vāsudevo’smi pāṇḍavānām dhanañjayaḥ;
Munīnām apyaham vyāsaḥ kavīnām uśanā kaviḥ — 10. 37

‘Of the Vṛṣṇīs, I am Vāsudeva; of the Pāṇḍavas, Dhanañjaya; and among the *munis,* I am Vyāsa; of the poets, Uśana, the sage.’

Vṛṣṇīnām vāsudevo’smi, ‘among the Vṛṣṇīs, the Yādavas, I am Kṛṣṇā or Vāsudeva’. There He is only identifying Himself. He Himself is the universal Divine. Now He says, among the Yādavas I am that Kṛṣṇa. Vāsudeva is the son of Vasudeva, Kṛṣṇa’s father. So, Vāsudeva becomes Kṛṣṇa. *Pāṇḍavānām dhanañjayaḥ,* ‘among the Pāṇḍavas, I am Arjuna’.

Arjuna is in front of him! *Munīnām apyaham vyāsaḥ,* ‘among all the sages, *munis*, I am Vyāsa’, that brilliant mind which has contributed so much to the culture of India, to the intellect of India. That is Vyāsa of the *Mahābhārata,* and of many *Purāṇas* also. *Kavīnām uśanā kaviḥ,* ‘among the poets, I am the poet Uśana’, an old Vedic poet.

दण्डो दमयतामस्मि नीतिरस्मि जिगीषताम् ।
मौनं चैवास्मि गुह्यानां ज्ञानं ज्ञानवतामहम् ॥३८॥

Daṇḍo damayatāmasmi nītirasmi jigīṣatām;
Maunam caivāsmi guhyānām jñānam jñānavatām aham—10. 38

‘Of punishers, I am the sceptre; of those who seek to conquer, I am statesmanship; and also of things secret, I am silence; and the knowledge of knowers, am I.’

Daṇḍo damayatāmasmi, ‘among those forces that discipline men and women in the political life, I am *daṇḍa,* the principle of punishment’. *Daṇḍa* means stick. You hold a stick; you don’t punish actually. That stick is there. That itself makes for orderliness in society. So, this is the concept of political authority through law and law-enforcing power. Just like the mace in the British Parliament. That mace is the authority of the Parliament. It doesn’t actually break the head of anybody, but the very principle of authority makes for even goals of life and whenever things go wrong the force acts. That is called a political state with a power to enforce law and order on society. In fact, the philosophy of a political state is called *daṇḍa-nīti* in our Sanskrit language. The science of *daṇḍa—daṇḍa* means punishment, a big stick to punish; that is all. Only the stick is there and because of that, people go in the right way. And it is very very true that almost 99 per cent of people need an external power to make them behave properly. Only those who are moral and highly spiritual do not need an external power. They have their own power of self-discipline; they will never go wrong in their attitude, never harm anybody else. But the majority is not like that. If there is no law and order, each will try to exploit the other. Therefore, we need a state. We need law, regulation, etc. What Schopenhauer, the German philosopher, said is so true in actual life: ‘man is moral, not because he chooses to be so but because of the fear of the police

and public opinion'. These two things keep us moral. Take these two things away, and most people will be at each others' throat. So, *daṇḍo damayatām asmi.* I am that sense of political power of the state which regulates the whole society, *damayatām,* 'which disciplines' the whole society. *Nītirasmi jigīṣatām,* 'I am justice in those who seek victory', because there is a famous belief that justice alone can win. Injustice can win temporarily, but real victory belongs to *dharma,* justice. So, here it is said, *nītirasmi jigīṣatām,* those who obtain victory do so because they follow *dharma,* righteousness. That is the belief of the best of thinkers in every country, though, very often, the world itself may show the opposite. The unjust sometimes win. But we must take a long-range view. Therefore, this is that long-range view. *Yato dharmaḥ tato jayaḥ,* 'where there is *dharma*, there is victory'. That is a Sanskrit statement in the *Mahābhārata. Maunam caivāsmi guhyānām.* Another beautiful idea! 'Among all mysteries, I am silence'. The ultimate Reality is described in the Upaniṣads as silence. When you speak, you bring down Reality. You try to catch It in terms and formulae, but It escapes. Only in silence can you truly express the nature of the ultimate Reality. So, the greatest mystery is silence. And the Upaniṣads said, *śānto'yam ātmā,* 'this Atman is pure silence'. A disciple went to a teacher and requested him to teach him the highest Reality. The teacher kept quiet. The disciple put the question a second time, a third time. And when he said, 'I have been asking three times and you have not replied at all. Why is it so?' Then the teacher said, 'I have been answering your question all the time. You couldn't understand it! The Atman is silence, quietness, *śānto'yam ātmā*.' That is a great idea in the Upaniṣads. Whenever you express a thing, you just bring it within the fold of thought and speech. You restrict Reality. So, you cannot really express Reality which is beyond speech, beyond thought, beyond ideation. It is 'pure is', 'pure being'. That is the language used in the Upaniṣads and yet we do need language for communication. So, we use the language with the understanding that language can only give you an approximation. Thought can give you only an approximation. Truth itself is beyond speech and thought. *Yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha,* this is the beautiful expression of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad:* 'that Reality from which speech and thought recoil not being able to comprehend It'. That is why at higher levels of mental development, speech becomes less and less. Intellectual expression

becomes less and less. More of experience is emphasized there. In the beginning of life you can use plenty of language. We can be chattering all the time. But the more you approach that highest Reality, your speech becomes less and less; your argumentation becomes less and less. It is pure experience. That is absolute silence.

Sri Ramakrishna compares it with the honeybee and its behaviour. It is humming all the time, hovering over the flower. Humming, humming, humming. As soon as it sits on the flower and begins to drink the honey, all humming is over. That is the nature of spiritual experience. One can indulge in any amount of talk, any amount of argumentation in the beginning. But as one approaches closer and closer to Reality, these become less and less. And in direct experience, they die down. Therefore, silence has a tremendous value and I think, in higher aspects of all mystical life, you find this silence more and more. So, 'among all the mysteries I am silence'. *Maunam* actually means mouth shut and even thought becoming quiet. There is a beautiful expression in William Wordsworth:

> …that serene and blessed mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on,—
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul:

So, you can see the beauty of this physical instrument of speech or the psychic instrument of thought. These are all good only for interacting with the external world; to name a thing, to label it with concepts and words. Both are needed. They call it percept and concept. A thing that you see is a percept, and, when you think about it, it becomes a concept. These are needed only for interaction with the external world. When you deal with the Self, these things drop away, collapse; they have no value there. And yet, in order to approach It, we do need to use these things, but with carefulness; don't run away with the words. Word is not anything here. 'The letter killeth', when Jesus said, this is what he meant. 'The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life'. Therefore, don't depend on the letter, nor the concept, go

beyond both. That is called experience of Reality, experience of the Divine. That is the true dimension of religion.

Jñānam jñānavatām aham, 'I am that *jñāna* among those who have achieved *jñāna.' Jñāna* means spiritual knowledge. We know our true nature. I am that *jñāna* among those who have got *jñāna.*

यच्चापि सर्वभूतानां बीजं तदहमर्जुन ।
न तदस्ति विना यत्स्यान्मया भूतं चराचरम् ॥३९॥

Yaccāpi sarvabhūtānām bījam tadaham arjuna;
Na tadasti vinā yatsyāt mayā bhūtam carācaram — 10. 39

'And whatsoever is the seed of all beings, that also am I, O Arjuna. There is no being, whether moving or unmoving, that can exist without Me.'

Arjuna, 'O Arjuna!' *Yaccāpi sarvabhūtānām bījam tadaham,* 'all the things of the world have, as their seed, Myself, that ultimate Reality.' Śrī Kṛṣṇa is speaking, identifying Himself with that ultimate Reality of pure Consciousness, infinite and non-dual. So, whatever there is in this world has its origin in that ultimate Reality of pure Consciousness. I am that seed of everything in the world; I am that; I am that. *Na tadasti vinā yatsyāt mayā bhūtam carācaram,* 'there is nothing in this world, whether moving or unmoving, that can exist without Me'. Take away My being from anything in the world and it becomes nonexistent. I give the value of existence to it. Sri Ramakrishna gives the example of zero: it has no value even if you put twenty thousand zeroes. But put a '1' before the zeroes and every zero gets value; every new zero adds to the value. That '1' is the Divine. Among the changing things of the world, there is One that is real. The One, the infinite, the immortal; that makes them real. Take that away and they become unreal.

Śaṅkarācārya refers to it in his Upaniṣad commentary saying, *tadātmanā vinirmuktaḥ jagat asat sampadyate,* 'take away the Atman from the universe, and the universe becomes absolutely a zero,' with no value at all. That is what the *Gītā* is stressing. Put the One behind the many; then the many get a value. Otherwise, they have no value. This is spiritual understanding, spiritual vision. So, this is an important teaching that

whatever is real is Brahman. So, there is a classification in Vedanta: everything in the universe consists of five factors. It is a very important Vedantic study. What are the five factors? *Sat-cit-ānanda*—the first three: 'Truth or being, consciousness, and bliss.' These three plus two more: 'name and form', *nāma* and *rūpa.* All things in the world are composed of all these five items: *sat, cit, ānanda, nāma* and *rūpa.* All these differences are because of name and form. Everything is *sat cit ānanda.* And that *sat-cit-ānanda* portion is Brahman. And name-form portion is the world. The world is essentially *sat-cit-ānanda,* but with a special name and with a special form. Just like the ocean. Ocean is absolutely one sheet of water; then you have a wave. What is that wave? The ocean *plus* a name and a form. That is called the wave. You describe it that way. You can't describe the ocean. Just the infinite ocean; that is all. But once it gets a shape, you are able to name it, you are able to describe it. That is *nāma-rūpa,* name and form. Take for instance, a gold ornament. What is that gold ornament? Gold *plus* name and form. That is all. A bangle or a garland, any name you can give, but actually it is gold plus name and form. So, Vedanta says Brahman or Atman plus name and form is this universe. Take away the name and form. What remains? Only Brahman. These Vedantic ideas influenced some of the Western poets in the last century. And there you find therefore a British poet like Shelley expressing this truth in *Adonais*, an elegy on the death of John Keats: 'the One remains, the many change and pass'. So, this is the teaching: we have to put One behind the many. There is a verse from our Upaniṣadic literature, in the *Īśā Upaniṣad,* and the first verse in it emphasizes this truth: *Īśā vāsyam idam sarvam. Idam sarvam,* 'this entire manifested universe' is nothing but the Divine, that infinite pure Consciousness.

What modern astrophysics calls the background material which exploded and made for the evolution of the universe, Vedanta calls that the infinite pure Consciousness, one and non-dual. That exploded and became this universe. Therefore, that Consciousness is there in nature and it is manifest in living beings. It is more manifested in the human being. And men and women can also discover the truth in themselves and in others. The idea 'within the universe and beyond the universe', comes a little later, in a verse in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.* An elephant was caught by a

crocodile; he was suffering terribly, and it praised the Divine by offering to the Lord a lotus from the pool he was in. And the Lord came and saved that elephant. That is the mythical story in the *Bhāgavatam.* It is well known as the myth of *Gajendramokṣa,* 'salvation of the lordly elephant'. I have seen it depicted very beautifully in art in Cambodia and Indonesia. There, the elephant praises the Divine and one *śloka* in that hymn is very *famous for conveying this idea (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* VIII. iii. 3):

Yasmin idam yataścedam yenedam ya idam svayam;
Yo'smāt parasmāt ca paraḥ tam prapadye svayambhuvam —

'I take refuge in the self-existing Reality', *tam prapadye svayambhuvam;* that is the first description. Then the next is, a series of utterances regarding the nature of that Reality. *Yasmin idam,* 'in Whom is this universe'; *yataścedam,* 'from Whom is this universe'; *yena idam,* 'by Whom is this universe'; *ya idam svayam,* 'Who Himself is this universe'; and then, *yo asmāt parasmāt ca paraḥ,* 'Who is also beyond this universe'; *tam prapadye,* 'in Him I take refuge'. The highest Vedantic ideas are expressed in that verse of the hymn of the elephant in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.* So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here in the *Gītā,* 'everything moving and unmoving in this world has Me as the focus of their Reality.' Take Me away and they lose their sense of being.

नान्तोऽस्ति मम दिव्यानां विभूतीनां परन्तप ।
एष तूद्देशतः प्रोक्तो विभूतेर्विस्तरो मया ॥४०॥

Nānto'sti mama divyānām vibhūtīnām parantapa;
Eṣa tūddeśataḥ prokto vibhūteḥ vistaro mayā — 10. 40

'There is no end to My Divine powers, O scorcher of foes; but this is a brief statement by Me of the particulars of My Divine powers or attributes.'

Nānto'sti mama divyānām vibhūtīnām parantapa, 'there is no end to My Divine manifestations or powers, O Arjuna'. There is no end to it. Infinite they are. *Eṣa tūddeśataḥ prokto vibhūtervistaro mayā,* 'I have told you only just a few of the infinite powers of the Divine as the universe, as a sample.'

Then comes a very great utterance of the *Gītā* which has educated the people of India to bow down before greatness wherever it occurs, in any

country, in any community, in any religion. If they see greatness, they bow down. That sanction comes from this verse:

यद्यद्विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा ।
तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोंऽशसम्भवम् ॥४१॥

Yadyadvibhūtimatsattvam śrīmadūrjitameva vā;
Tattadevāvagaccha tvam mama tejo'mśasambhavam—10. 41

'Whatever being there is great, prosperous, or powerful, you know that to be produced from a part of My splendour.'

Very beautiful verse. Wherever you find, *vibhūtimat,* 'endowed with a tremendous power of manifestation'; *sattvam,* 'pure energy and power'; *śrīmat,* 'good fortune'; *ūrjitam eva vā,* 'or with tremendous energy'. Wherever you find any such manifestation, uplifting humanity by doing great works, great thinking, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'please know that a portion of My glory is present there', *tat tat eva avagaccha tvam mama tejo'mśa sambhavam.* Don't think that I am far away from you. When the concept of God is an item among items outside this universe, which is called monotheism, this subject, this idea, can never come under that theology. This Reality is infinite, universal, present in everyone—in some with a greater force, in some in a lesser way. An Indian sees in Jesus, a wonderful life, holy and pure, uplifting humanity; he or she sees the manifestation of the Divine there. Immediately, he or she will bow down there. So also, anybody else. For example, we respect American President, Abraham Lincoln. He did wonderful work against Negro slavery in America. We see a touch of the Divine in that kind of action. So, this applies all over the world. We have been educated to respect greatness which uplifts humanity wherever it happens, because this teaching is there. *Mama tejo'mśa sambhavam,* 'it is an aspect of My Divine energy manifesting there'. That is the importance of both this concept of Reality and the idea of its universal manifestation in the universe. On this subject, somebody asked this question to Sri Ramakrishna. That somebody was not an ordinary person; he was Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. He asked this question, 'Sir, is there partiality in the Divine that He manifests more in one and less in the other?' 'Yes,' *said Sri Ramakrishna. 'In this universe there is the*

*mani*festation, but there is also the difference in the quantum of manifestation. In some it is more, and in some it is less.' Then came the question; 'Is God partial then?' Immediately Sri Ramakrishna asked, 'what do you mean by partial? Why do I come to see you? I see a greater manifestation in you than in others, and therefore I come to see you. Many others also come and honour you. Have you developed two horns for us to come and see you?' He asked this question in Bengali: *Duṭo singh beriyeche?,* 'have you developed two horns so that people come and see you?' 'You have got a high character. Your intellect is clear, your heart is full of compassion, so the Divine energy is manifested more in you than in others. So, we come to see you.' That is a fact of experience. There is no question of partiality or any such thing. It is up to you to manifest more. Just like what you see in the human body: this skin cannot manifest light, but the eye ball can manifest light. The same skin, but it manifests light. There is difference between the two. So, behind differences in the manifestation are grades of manifestation, some more and some less. That is why this world is a world. If it is all one type, it will be no world at all. Differences make the world a real experience. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa expounded this wonderful idea of Divine manifestation in the universe. This universe is 'essentially Divine': *īsāvāsyam.* Our eyes cannot reveal this truth, but when the mind is pure, it is able to penetrate deep and discover that One behind the many in yourself and then, when you look out, you find the same One manifested as this universe. This is the hint that is sung in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* in one or two beautiful verses. Scientist, Sir J.C. Bose of Calcutta, discovered the unity of the living and the non-living. He was a great physicist. First he was dealing with radio waves—the first one to discover radio waves in his own laboratory in Calcutta. Then he started studying the living plants. He studied that little plant, *Mimosa pudica*. It also has experience. Then he turned over to the study of metals, ordinary metals. He found that there is sensation in metals also; he found, in all these, response to stimulus. So, he expounded the theory of the unity of all nature: that this kind of response comes not only in the living but also in the non-living. With his own experiments, with his own experimental apparatus which he had designed, he could magnify various little events into a million times. Then he went to England. There he spoke before the Royal Society of England and in one or two other places. Distinguished scientists were

there. He demonstrated; some were sceptical, some were very much taken by this wonderful demonstration. All this was described in *The Times* paper at that time. And *The Times* paper wrote, 'when we in the West were lost in the multitudinous things of the world, the Eastern sage went beyond and discovered a One behind the many'. And Bose's own speech at the end of the demonstration was:

'When I saw these beautiful events taking place unifying the living and the non-living, I understood the meaning of the utterance of my great ancestors in the Vedas on the banks of the Ganges when they proclaimed this truth: "he who sees the One in the many, to him belongs eternal peace, eternal happiness, and to none else, and to none else".'

That is a verse from the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad.* We see differences; we are not able to penetrate these differences to see the unity that is there. The whole function of human knowledge is to penetrate the surface and see the One behind the many. Every science does this. Now we are trying to unify the whole of nature in physics through a unifying field theory. Whenever one sees differences, a question arises, 'is this true?'. 'Is it true that they are entirely different? There must be a unity behind diversity.' Like biology telling us today, there are varieties of human racial types. But, as homo sapiens, they are one. There is only one human species among human beings—not two or more—with capacity of inter-breeding and inter-thinking. Now, this is the discovery of modern biology. Similarly, also in other departments of science. Vedanta took up the whole of experience and discovered the unity behind the diversity, and broke down barriers to neighbourliness. We are all essentially one. We may have differences in colour, in educational status, in cultural level, but we are all spiritually one. And this is the Vedantic language of ages ago. So, finally Śrī Kṛṣṇa concludes the tenth chapter with the verse:

अथवा बहुनैतेन किं ज्ञातेन तवार्जुन ।
विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ॥४२॥

Athavā bahunaitena kim jñātena tavārjuna;
Viṣṭabhyāham idam kṛtsnam ekāmśena sthito jagat—10. 42

‘Of what avails you to know all this diversity, O Arjuna? I exist supporting this entire universe by a portion of Myself.’

‘What is the use of further elaboration, O Arjuna? The truth is, I sustain this whole universe with a small portion of Myself.’ *Idam kṛtsnam,* ‘this entire universe’; *viṣṭabhyāham,* ‘I sustain’. How? *Ekāmśena,* ‘from a small portion of Myself’. That is the nature of this manifestation. You find the same utterance by the sages of the old *Ṛg Veda,* in the beginning itself of the *Puruṣa Sūkta: pādo'sya viśvā bhūtāni tripādasyāmṛtam divi,* ‘a quarter of the Reality is manifested as the universe; the rest is all beyond manifestation and is immortal’. This universe is a product of a bit of that Divine energy manifesting as this multiplicity. The same *Puruṣa Sūkta* says, *etāvān asya mahimā,* ‘this is His glory as seen in this universe’; but, *ato jyāyāmśca pūruṣaḥ,* ‘the Real Self is beyond this manifestation’. So, there is one common feature between modern science and Vedanta, and that is the unity behind this diversity. And every science also accepts that eventually all this diversity will go back to that unity. In Vedanta and modern science these two truths are fully accepted. The world came from the One, and will go back to the One. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here, ‘what is the need to know in more detail about this truth?’ The truth is, ‘I sustain this whole universe with a portion of Myself’. That is the idea.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said earlier: ‘This is My *māyā*. Those who come and take refuge in Me, they will overcome this *māyā*’, which produces this notion of separateness. Why this war? Why this crime? Why this violence? From a sense of separateness only they come. Therefore, all these troubles come. If we are all essentially one, how can troubles come? That knowledge has to come. Then only peace will come to the world. Basic knowledge is: we are essentially one. Therefore, we can express ourselves in acts and moods of love and service to each other. No hatred can ever come from that experience. This is the verdict of the Upaniṣads. Here, in the last *śloka* Śrī Kṛṣṇa says therefore, that ‘I manifest Myself as the universe, but with only a portion of Myself.’

The solar energy manifested as the solar system is only an infinitesimal portion of solar energy. The rest is all still there as the sun. So, from all these points of view, we developed the concept of Reality, and we never

made a separation between the world and God. The infinite One is manifested as this universe. The spark of the Divine is there in everything. In order to realize this truth, we need to train our minds, train our knowledge-process, first by studying external nature, seeing unity there, then turning over to the study of the science of human possibilities which is Vedanta, and discover the unity behind the multiplicity of beings in this world. This is the Vedantic concept of human knowledge in its two dimensions, physical and super-physical, as expounded earlier in chapter seven.

When the body consciousness goes away, we realize this truth. That is referred to in a famous small book of Vedanta, *Dṛk-dṛśya-vivek,* 'Discrimination between the observer and the observed or the seer and the seen', in the opening verse and in a later one. Till now, physical science studied only the seen. Now, science is turning towards the seer, the observer. When Vedanta studied both together, it came to the following conclusion.

The first verse says:

Rūpam dṛśyam locanam dṛk
tat dṛśyam dṛktu mānasam;
Dṛśyāḥ dhīvṛttayaḥ sākṣī
dṛgeva na tu dṛśyate —

'Form is the seen, eye is the seer; eye is the seen, mind is the seer; ideas in the mind are the seen, the *sākṣi* or witness is ever the seer and never the seen.'

Dehābhimāne galite vijñāte paramātmani;
Yatra yatra mano yāti tatra tatra samādhayaḥ —

'When the elation that you are (only) the physical body is removed and you realize the Supreme Atman,' then what happens to you?, 'wherever the mind goes, it attains *samādhi*.'

When the body-consciousness that makes us separate from each other goes away, we are able to achieve this universal vision. This is highly praised in many works of poetry, art, and drama all over the world. At a higher level, this is what you are going to achieve: complete unity. In the

heart of nature there is unity. On the surface, all differences are there. That knowledge will come to human beings only when the body-consciousness goes away. It is the body that makes us separate from each other. I am this psychophysical system—I am separate from you and you are separate from me—when this awareness goes away, pure Consciousness comes in and we find we are all essentially one. Actually body-consciousness is behind most of the evils in human society, including racial conflicts. The UNESCO has, in its conference in Moscow, discovered this truth and proclaimed it in a series of propositions that racial superiority has no scientific basis (vide *UNESCO Courier,* April 1965). Any race can attain high levels of development provided you give it proper nourishment. Today's understanding of the world is based on declarations of this kind. All these differences were coming from prejudice, ignorance and delusion. We cultivated these in the earlier ages. Now they have no value. Ten or twelve paragraphs of the Moscow declaration are there. I quoted a few of them in my book, *Message of the Upanishads,* where the Upaniṣads themselves say, teach every child the ultimate unity of things. These differences are on the surface. We don't deny *the differences. But that is the surface view. The deeper view is that they are essentially one, says the Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (II. i. 11):

Manasaivedam āptavyam neha nānāsti kimcana;
Mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum gacchati ya iha nāneva paśyati —

This truth has to be grasped not through the senses but by the mind. Senses cannot grasp unity; mind can. So, *manasā eva idam āptavyam,* 'through mind alone you must realize this truth'. What is the truth? *Neha nānā asti kimcana,* 'there are no differences here'. But if you still go on living with the idea of these differences, you will experience death after death, *mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum gacchati.* Wars, violence, crime, all sorts of evils come because of these racial and other differences. So, the Upaniṣads said four thousand years ago, *mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum gacchati ya iha nānā iva paśyati.* And life and more life comes only from the knowledge that we are essentially one. Mind must be trained in this awareness. Minds of our children must be trained in the vision of the oneness of all. Even with nature we are one; not only among human beings is there unity. We are one with the animals, one with the plants, everything. There is a basic oneness in this

universe. Conduct your life in the light of this. That is the language of Vedanta.

In this tenth chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has given us this vision of divine manifestations as the universe. This is how the tenth chapter closes, opening the eleventh chapter, in which we meet Arjuna desiring to see the universal Form of the Divine, the *viśvarūpa* as it is called. That is the beauty and power that is going to be expressed in the eleventh chapter. Śrī Kṛṣṇa accepts Arjuna's question and shows him His universal Form, *viśvarūpa darśana.* That is a very famous chapter. We shall enter into that chapter next Sunday when we meet here again.

इति विभूति-योगो नाम दशमोऽध्यायः ।

Iti vibhūti-yogo nāma daśamo'dhyāyaḥ —

'The end of the tenth chapter, designated, *Glimpses of the Divine Glory.'*

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 11

Viśvarūpa Darśanam
The Vision of the Universal Form

We finished the study of chapter ten of the *Gītā,* known as *Vibhūti yoga,* 'the Lord manifested as the universe', last Sunday. There we heard in the last but one verse this great summing up:

Yadyad vibhūtimat sattvam śrīmad ūrjitam eva vā;
Tat tat eva avagaccha tvam mama tejo'mśa sambhavam —

'Wherever you find a great manifestation of energy, beneficial and uplifting humanity, know that I am present there. A portion of My own infinite nature is present in that particular event or person.'

This is the teaching that made we Indians respect greatness wherever it came. Not a communal greatness, national greatness, racial greatness, but just human greatness. We could see the spark of the divine in that greatness. I don't know any other nation or followers of religion being educated in this attitude. But in India this was the education given to us. So, we bow down to greatness wherever it occurs. Our great writers also have said that there are sages among *mlecchas*, sages among other communities also. And this evening we enter the great chapter, the eleventh, known as the *Viśva rūpa darśana* chapter—The Vision of the Universal Form of the Divine. Many sages and saints and devotees consider this chapter as very very important in the *Gītā: The Vision of the Universal Form of the Divine.*

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca—

'Arjuna said:'

मदनुग्रहाय परमं गुह्यमध्यात्मसंज्ञितम् ।
यत्त्वयोक्तं वचस्तेन मोहोऽयं विगतो मम ॥१॥

Madanugrahāya paramam guhyam adhyātma samjñitam;
Yat tvayoktam vacastena moho'yam vigato mama — 11. 1

'By the supremely profound words on the subject known as spirituality, that have been spoken by You out of compassion towards me, this my delusion is gone.'

Madanugrahāya paramam yat tvayā uktam, 'whatever You have spoken till now out of love and blessing for me'; *guhyam adhyātma samjñitam*— what did You speak on? *Adhyātma samjñitam,* 'bearing the name of spirituality'. That is what You spoke, and whatever You spoke, as a consequence of that, what has happened to me? *Yattvayoktam vacastena,* 'through those words spoken by You'; *moho'yam vigato mama,* 'this, my delusion, has gone away'. I now realize that it is Your infinite Self that manifests as this universe everywhere. The distinction between 'I' and 'you', which is due to delusion, has vanished now. This is what Arjuna is confessing here: 'This *moha,* delusion, of mine is gone.' In the eighteenth chapter, *śloka* 73, he will repeat it again: 'I have lost all my delusion and ignorance. I will do what you ask me to do.' That is Arjuna's last statement in response to what Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said earlier in verse 63 of the eighteenth chapter, 'What you think proper, you do, after considering what all I have said. I am not going to *decide* for you. You decide for yourself.' That is a beautiful idea. You do not become dependent upon a teacher. You depend upon yourself. Take whatever the teacher has said, think deeply about it, come to your own decision, and take the responsibility for your decision. That is mature manhood and womanhood. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa wants. So, here, in the first sentence, Arjuna says, 'what all I have heard from You is the subject of spirituality', *adhyātmasamjñitam,* 'by the name *adhyātma*'*; samjñā* means name. 'That has removed my delusion.'

भवाप्ययौ हि भूतानां श्रुतौ विस्तरशो मया ।
त्वत्तः कमलपत्राक्ष माहात्म्यमपि चाव्ययम् ॥२॥

Bhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām śrutau vistaraśo mayā;
Tvattaḥ kamalapatrākṣa māhātmyam api cāvyayam — 11. 2

‘From Yourself, O lotus-eyed one, I have heard at length of the origin and dissolution of beings, as well as of Your inexhaustible greatness.’

The origin and dissolution of this universe, *bhava* and *apyaya; bhava* means *prabhava,* ‘origin’; *apyaya* means ‘dissolution’ of this universe; *śrutau vistaraśo mayā,* ‘I have heard from you extensively’. *Tvattaḥ,* ‘from You’; *kamalapatrākṣa,* Śrī Kṛṣṇa is addressed as one ‘with lotus petal eyes’. *Māhātmyam api ca avyayam,* ‘and Your own infinite *māhātmyam,* glory’, that also I have heard from you.

एवमेतद्यथात्थ त्वमात्मानं परमेश्वर ।
द्रष्टुमिच्छामि ते रूपमैश्वरं पुरुषोत्तम ॥३॥

Evam etat yathāttha tvam ātmānam parameśvara;
Draṣṭum icchāmi te rūpam aiśvaram puruṣottama— 11. 3

‘So it is, O Supreme Lord! You have declared Yourself. (Still) I desire to see Your *Īśvara*-form, O Supreme Person.’

I am not satisfied with whatever You have spoken about Yourself. I am not satisfied with hearing only; I want to see that Universal Form of Yours. It is not enough to hear. It should be audio and visual. Both must be there. So, Arjuna is very eager to see that Universal Form of the Divine. In Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s life, there are about three or four occasions when He showed His Divine Form. One was in the court of Dhṛtarāṣṭra or the Kauravas, where Śiśupāla did some mischief, uttered some very bad words. At that time Śrī Kṛṣṇa showed His Divine form and killed Śiśupāla also. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s minister, Akrūra, had a similar experience. Just a few such occasions are there, including the occasion in His childhood. He had eaten some mud, denied it, and mother Yaśoda asked Him to open His mouth. He did it and His mother saw the whole universe and herself in it. But the outstanding one of all such occasions is this Kurukṣetra experience of Arjuna where Arjuna has been shown the Infinite Form of *Bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *Evam etat yathā āttha tvam ātmānam parameśvara,* ‘whatever You have said are all true; I accept them’. But, *draṣṭum icchāmi te rūpam aiśvaram puruṣottama,* ‘I desire to see Your “Divine” Form, *aiśvaram.*‘

मन्यसे यदि तच्छक्यं मया द्रष्टुमिति प्रभो ।
योगेश्वर ततो मे त्वं दर्शयात्मानमव्ययम् ॥४॥

Manyase yadi tacchakyam mayā draṣṭum iti prabho;
Yogeśvara tato me tvam darśayātmānam avyayam — 11. 4

'If, O Lord, You think me capable of seeing it, then, O Lord of *Yogīs*, show me Your immutable Self.'

If You consider me fit to see that Form, *mayā draṣṭum,* 'to be seen by me'; *manyase yadi,* 'if You think'; *tat śakyam,* 'I am fit for it'; then, *yogeśvara,* 'O Master of *yoga*'. See the title! Śrī Kṛṣṇa is called *Yogeśvara.* Not only here, but also towards the last sentence of the *Gītā* the word '*yogeśvara*' will come. *Tato me tvam darśaya ātmānam avyayam,* 'please therefore, show me Your infinite Form, O Yogeśvara'. This is the concept of *yoga*. Here, Master of *yoga* means: 'how did He make the One become many in this universe?' That is the *yoga* power. That is the great *yoga* of the Divine: the One becoming the many, appearing as the many, and yet remaining perfectly okay as the One Infinite Divine. That is called the *yoga* power of the Divine, *yoga-śakti,* and He is the Master of that *yoga.* That, the *Gītā* repeatedly emphasizes; other passages in the *Mahābhārata* also repeat this *yoga* power of the Divine.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच—

Śrībhagavān uvāca—

'Śrī Kṛṣṇa answered:'

पश्य मे पार्थ रूपाणि शतशोऽथ सहस्रश: ।
नानाविधानि दिव्यानि नानावर्णाकृतीनि च ॥५॥

Paśya me pārtha rūpāṇi śataśo'tha sahasraśaḥ;
Nānāvidhāni divyāni nānāvarṇa ākṛtīni ca— 11. 5

'Behold, O son of Pṛthā, by hundreds and thousands, My different forms celestial, of various colours and shapes.'

Arjuna, see My infinite Forms. He says, *paśya,* 'behold'; *śataśo'tha sahasraśaḥ,* 'hundreds and thousands'; *nānā vidhāni divyāni*, 'different

forms celestial'; *nānāvarṇa,* 'of various colours'; *(nānā) ākṛtīni ca,* 'and of various shapes'. Whatever can be expressed in language is expressed in these words. But it will be given in greater detail as we proceed. So, here Śri Kṛṣṇa says, 'Come and see! O Arjuna!' Sañjaya will say later on, 'Śrī Kṛṣṇa showed His Divine Form.'

पश्यादित्यान्वसून् रुद्रानश्विनौ मरुतस्तथा ।
बहून्यदृष्टपूर्वाणि पश्याश्चर्याणि भारत ॥६॥

Paśyādityān vasūn rudrān aśvinau marutastathā;
Bahūnyadṛṣṭapūrvāṇi paśya āścaryāṇi bhārata— 11. 6

'Behold the *Ádityas,* the *Vasus,* the *Rudras,* the twin *Aśvins,* and the *Maruts;* behold, O descendent of Bharata, many wonders never seen before.'

See all these various Divine forms. What are they? *Ádityas* etc. In our mythology, there are twelve *Ádityas,* eight *Vasus,* eleven *Rudras,* two *Aśvins,* and *Maruts.* Behold, O Arjuna, many wonders never before seen on this earth. That is the language: *āścaryāṇi, adṛṣṭapūrvāṇi,* visions: wonders that these human eyes have not been able to see before. We can see the manifested universe. That itself is a great wonder. But still greater wonders are there which I, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, am going to show to you. But then a change in you is needed, which will be mentioned in verse 8. Now, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says,

इहैकस्थं जगत्कृत्स्नं पश्याद्य सचराचरम् ।
मम देहे गुडाकेश यच्चान्यद्द्रष्टुमिच्छसि ॥७॥

Ihaikastham jagat kṛtsnam paśyādya sacarācaram;
Mama dehe guḍākeśa yaccānyat draṣṭum icchasi— 11. 7

'See now, O Guḍākeśa, in this body of Mine, the whole universe centred in one—including the moving and the non-moving—and all else that you desire to see.'

Iha, 'here, in this very spot'; *mama dehe,* 'in this body of Mine'; and *adya,* 'now'; 'here and now, in this person of Mine', you can see manifested *jagat kṛtsnam,* 'the entire universe'; *sa carācaram,* 'consisting of moving

and unmoving entities'; *guḍākeśa,* 'O Arjuna'; *yat ca anyat draṣṭum icchasi,* 'and other things also which you want to see'. You will see all these things.

There are beautiful paintings and sculptures in Indonesia and other places, of the event narrated in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as a child, eating mud. Mother Yaśoda asks Him to open His mouth and becomes frightened by what she sees there: What is this? Here is my child, and what am I seeing in his mouth! Infinite dimension! That is one of the great events in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's childhood life depicted in art in many places.

न तु मां शक्यसे द्रष्टुमनेनैव स्वचक्षुषा ।
दिव्यं ददामि ते चक्षुः पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ॥८॥

Na tu mām śakyase draṣṭum anenaiva svacakṣuṣā;
Divyam dadāmi te cakṣuḥ paśya me yogam aiśvaram—11. 8

'But, you cannot see Me with these eyes of yours; I give you Divine or super-sensory sight; behold My supreme *yoga*-power.'

With these fleshy eyes, you can't see that Divine glory. There is a profound truth about it. *Divyam dadāmi te cakṣuḥ,* 'I give you the Divine eye.' With these Divine eyes, then *paśya me yogam aiśvaram,* 'see My *aiśvaram yogam,* Divine *yoga* power': see how I am the universal Self and yet am manifested as this universe; that, though manifested, yet I am just the same, the Divine, infinite Reality. That particular mysterious appearance of One as the many is through the power of *Māyā, Yogamāyā.*

सञ्जय उवाच —

Sañjaya uvāca—

'Sañjaya said:'

एवमुक्त्वा ततो राजन् महायोगेश्वरो हरिः ।
दर्शयामास पार्थाय परमं रूपमैश्वरम् ॥९॥

Evamuktvā tato rājan mahā yogeśvaro hariḥ;
Darśayāmāsa pārthāya paramam rūpamaiśvaram— 11. 9

‘Having spoken thus, O King, Hari, the great Lord of *Yoga*, showed unto the son of Pṛthā His supreme *Īśvara*-Form.’

King Dhṛtarāṣṭra was in Hastināpura, in his palace, and Sañjaya was reporting to him, what was happening in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, in these words: ‘O King, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *mahā yogeśvara,* the great Lord of *yoga*’. He is *Hariḥ;* Hari or Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa, all these are the same. *Darśayāmāsa pārthāya,* ‘He showed to Pārtha’, *parmam rūpam aiśvaram,* ‘His supreme divine Form’. That is what is going to be described in the following verses:

अनेकवक्त्रनयनमनेकाद्भुतदर्शनम् ।
अनेकदिव्याभरणं दिव्यानेकोद्यतायुधम् ॥१०॥

Anekavaktranayanam anekādbhutadarśanam;
Anekadivyābharaṇam divyānekodyatāyudham— 11. 10

‘With numerous mouths and eyes, with numerous wondrous sights, with numerous celestial ornaments, with numerous celestial weapons uplifted.’

He is giving a little detail in this verse. Whatever is possible to describe in words, Sañjaya is describing: with numerous mouths and also eyes, numerous wondrous sights, with numerous celestial ornaments, with numerous celestial weapons uplifted. When you see the whole world in one single look, if you can do that, you will see all these things there. Consider, for example, any particular point of time; say, just now: in various parts of the world, somebody is dying, somebody is born, somebody is fighting, somebody is doing good work; all these are going on at the same time in millions of forms. You can’t get a synoptic view of *all* of them with these normal eyes. But with the divine eye, you can. Many events are going on all over the world. What a wonderful mystery is this universe! *Mysterious Universe*, that is the language used by Sir James Jeans for his book on modern science. Highly mysterious is it!

You can just think, as I said, how many wonderful things are simultaneously going on in the world. Many more things, which are subtle, are going on too. We can’t see these subtle things with these eyes. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said in the 8th verse, ‘I am going to give you a divine eye to see that

mystery.' With these fleshy eyes we can see a good deal of that mystery, but not enough. There are profound dimensions which these eyes cannot reveal. So, I give you that divine eye to see all these things in Me.

दिव्यमाल्याम्बरधरं दिव्यगन्धानुलेपनम् ।
सर्वाश्चर्यमयं देवमनन्तं विश्वतोमुखम ॥११॥

Divya mālyāmbaradharam divya gandhānulepanam;
Sarvāścaryamayam devam anantam viśvatomukham—11. 11

'Wearing celestial garlands and apparel, anointed with celestial-scented unguents, the all-wonderful *Deva*, resplendent, boundless, and all-formed.'

Wearing celestial garments and dress, anointed with celestial-scented unguents, all-wonderful, resplendent, boundless and all-formed. *Sarvāścaryamayam,* 'all highly wonderful'; *devam,* 'the Divine Being, shining, resplendent'; *anantam,* 'infinite, without end'; *viśvatomukham,* 'looking at all directions', 'with the capacity to see everywhere', 'of universal face', like the sun, for example. I compare that kind of capacity to the sun. The sun looks in all directions. An example is nearby. Sun is not looking only in the front. It looks everywhere. If that is so with regard to this celestial phenomenon, how much more wonderful must be that Reality from which millions of suns have come into the universe! So, that is the language. This extraordinary phenomenon which only the Divine eye can see, is described in the next verse, the famous verse 12, which was the verse that came to the mind of the nuclear scientist Openheimer, when he first exploded the atom-bomb in USA just before the end of the Second World War. This is that *śloka.* When he saw the brilliance of the huge explosion rising up to the sky, deafening and even blinding the eye, he repeated to himself this verse.

दिवि सूर्यसहस्रस्य भवेद्युगपदुत्थिता ।
यदि भाः सदृशी सा स्याद्भासस्तस्य महात्मनः ॥१२॥

Divi sūryasahasrasya bhavet yugapadutthitā;
Yadi bhāḥ sadṛśī sā syāt bhāsastasya mahātmanaḥ —11. 12

‘If the splendour of a thousand suns were to rise up simultaneously in the sky, that would be like the splendour of that mighty Being.’

That *mahātma’s bhāsa* or glory or brilliance can be compared to a thousand suns rising simultaneously on the sky. *Divi sūrya sahasrasya,* ‘a thousand suns in the sky’; one sun itself is tremendously brilliant. But a thousand suns rising there! *Yadi bhavet yugapat,* ‘if it were to occur together’, *utthitā,* ‘rising’ on the horizon; *sā bhāḥ,* ‘that brilliance’, *syāt bhāsastasya mahātmanaḥ,* ‘would be like this Divine manifestation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa which has that glory’. Openheimer had studied the *Gītā, and so, this śloka* of the *Gītā* came to his mind: nearest to that extraordinary event which ushered in the Atomic Age in our modern history. That *mahātman’s bhāsa* means ‘brilliance of that mighty Being’ can be compared only to a thousand suns dazzling in the sky at the same time. Therefore,

तत्रैकस्थं जगत्कृत्स्नं प्रविभक्तमनेकधा ।
अपश्यद्देवदेवस्य शरीरे पाण्डवस्तदा ॥१३॥

Tatraikastham jagatkṛtsnam pravibhaktam anekadhā;
Apaśyat devadevasya śarīre pāṇḍavastadā — 11. 13

‘There in the body of the God of gods, the son of Pāṇḍu then saw the whole universe resting in One, with its manifold divisions.’

Then Arjuna saw, *tatraikastham,* ‘in one single spot’; *jagatkṛtsnam,* ‘the entire universe’; *pravibhaktam anekadhā,* ‘divided into multiple manifestations’—One single Reality divided into infinite manifestations. *Apaśyat devadevasya śarīre pāṇḍavaḥ tadā,* ‘Arjuna then saw in the body of devadeva, the God of gods, in the supremely Divine, namely, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.’

ततः स विस्मयाविष्टो हृष्टरोमा धनञ्जयः ।
प्रणम्य शिरसा देवं कृताञ्जलिरभाषत ॥१४॥

Tataḥ sa vismayāviṣṭo hṛṣṭaromā dhanañjayaḥ;
Praṇamya śirasā devam kṛtāñjaliḥ abhāṣata — 11. 14

‘Then Dhanañjaya, filled with wonder, with his hairs standing on end, bending down his head to the *Deva* in adoration, spoke with joined palms.’

Dhanañjayaḥ, ‘Arjuna’; *vismayāviṣṭaḥ,* ‘filled with wonder’; *hṛṣṭaromā,* ‘with his hairs standing on end’; *praṇamya śirasā devam,* ‘saluting, with bent head, that Divine Person’; *kṛtāñjaliḥ,* ‘with joined palms’; *saḥ abhāṣata,* ‘he said’. Now comes Arjuna’s hymn of praise of this Divine Reality. This has been very often recited as prayer by devotees for all these hundreds of years. There are passages in other literature also—very few, but still there are some—dealing with this Universal Vision of the Divine. The Psalms in the Old Testament contain very beautiful ideas, moral and spiritual. I particularly like one beautiful passage (*The Holy Bible*, Psalms, 138. 8-10, published by Harwin press Ltd. 1959):

‘If I go up to the heavens, You *are* there; if I sink to the nether world, You are present there.

‘If I take the wings of the dawn, if I settle at the farthest limits of the sea;

‘Even there Your hand shall guide me, and Your right hand hold me fast.’

We find in this Psalm, the conception of the Universal Form, though it is not found in any monotheistic religion. Monotheistic religions separate God and the world. But, when it becomes mystical experience in these religions, they break down this barrier. One Infinite Divine, everywhere—that is the realization that comes to these great mystics. We must separate mystics from ordinary creed-bound religious people. The latter have got a God separate from the world and far away. They have got dos and don’ts written down. Do this, don’t do this, like that. That is their religion. They have no experience of the Divine. But, when you begin to experience the Divine, many new dimensions come. In India there was no restriction by any clerical body on the type of experience one should get in one’s spiritual practice. All were accepted. So, various descriptions are there of devotees and of their realizations of the Divine. No clerical body in India suppressed any particular vision. But, other countries had that difficulty. The religious authority stipulated that only this way should you go; only this type of realization you should have. A track has been laid; don’t go beyond this. So, even if they get something higher, the saints have to express it very cleverly, mildly, so that they may not be persecuted. That is the story of a great

Roman Catholic saint like Meister Eckhart, the 12th century German mystic. He realized the Impersonal aspect of God behind the Personal God. But in theology, only Personal God is given; no place for anything impersonal. So, he was called up by the Inquisition in Rome to be punished. Fortunately, he died before he could go to the Inquisition. Similarly, many Muslim Sufi mystics have realized the infinite dimension of the Divine, have realized that they are one with the Divine. *An al Haq*, 'I am God', is the famous statement of the Sufi mystic who was killed for saying this. You are God!, how can you say so? The Islamic priests could not understand or tolerate that dimension.

Whereas in India, from the ordinary to the most extraordinary, every type of these experiences has been accepted and respected. We don't kill away spiritual people who have had various types of spiritual experiences. In such experiences, we can go deeper and still deeper. So, the idea of killing away a person who went beyond the creed-based limit of religion never happened in India. In all other countries it has happened, including secular Greece and secular Rome. *Remember this—the uniqueness of the country in which we live, the uniqueness and comprehensiveness of the philosophy that has been guiding us all these hundreds of years.* So, any experience of the Divine, we respect. Show the beauty of it in your character. If you are pure, if you are noble, we will accept it; these visions must find their expression in one's altered character. That is the test of a vision. And so, we watch and see. This person is truly genuine; his or her vision is genuine. Then we worship and salute that person. Otherwise, we ignore him or her. When people claim many visions, and if we do not find any impact of the visions on their life, we then just ignore them. But, still we won't kill anybody. This is the Indian tradition because of the influence of the Upaniṣads, the profound scientific approach to religion. That science had proclaimed that *experience* is the test of religion and *not mere creed or dogma*.

We find, in this verse of the *Gitā,* Arjuna filled with wonder, filled with amazement. You can imagine what it is to be amazed seeing this Universal Form.

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca —

‘Arjuna said:’

पश्यामि देवांस्तव देव देहे
सर्वांस्तथा भूतविशेषसङ्घान् ।
ब्रह्माणमीशं कमलासनस्थ-
मृषींश्च सर्वानुरगांश्च दिव्यान् ॥१५॥

Paśyāmi devāmstava deva dehe
sarvāmstathā bhūta viśeṣasaṅghān;
Brahmāṇam īśam kamalāsanastham-
ṛṣīmśca sarvān uragāmśca divyān — 11. 15

‘I see all the *devas,* O *Deva,* in Your body, and hosts of all grades of beings; Brahmā, the Lord, seated on the lotus, and all the *Ṛṣis* and celestial serpents.’

O Lord, I see in You all these wonderful manifestations. What are they? All the *devas,* ‘the luminous beings’, Brahmā, the creator of this world, who sits on the lotus that issues from the navel of Viṣṇu, all the *Ṛṣis* or sages, and celestial serpents like Vāsuki. All these are in You. In other cultures, some other things may be considered divine. However, in Hindu culture, these things were considered as divine, as being beyond the physical or natural order of things—a higher order of things. Therefore, these things are mentioned here.

अनेकबाहूदरवक्त्रनेत्रं
पश्यामि त्वां सर्वतोऽनन्तरूपम् ।
नान्तं न मध्यं न पुनस्तवादिं
पश्यामि विश्वेश्वर विश्वरूप ॥१६॥

Anekabāhūdaravaktranetram
paśyāmi tvām sarvato’nantarūpam;
Nāntam na madhyam na punastavādim
paśyāmi viśveśvara viśvarūpa — 11. 16

‘I see You of boundless form on every side, with manifold arms, stomachs, mouths, and eyes; neither the end nor the middle, nor also the beginning of Yourself do I see, O Lord of the universe, O Universal Form.’

Here Arjuna tries to express that tremendous wonder in a few words. Very often you cannot say anything. When you see anything very wonderful, you simply stand quiet, but a little expression is given by Arjuna by showing his reverence towards the Divine Form that he is experiencing in front of him. Then he says,

किरीटिनं गदिनं चक्रिणं च
तेजोराशिं सर्वतो दीप्तिमन्तम् ।
पश्यामि त्वां दुर्निरीक्ष्यं समन्ताद्-
दीप्तानलार्कद्युतिमप्रमेयम् ॥१७॥

Kirīṭinam gadinam cakriṇam ca
tejorāśim sarvato dīptimantam;
Paśyāmi tvām durnirīkṣyam samantāt
dīptānalārkadyutim aprameyam — 11. 17

‘I see You with diadem, club, and discus; a mass of radiance shining everywhere, very hard to look at, all around blazing like burning fire and sun, and immeasurable.’

You find in Lord Viṣṇu’s image, a diadem or crown on the head, a conch shell, a discus, a club and a lotus, *śaṅkha-cakra-gadā-padma*—these are the four things in the four hands of Lord Viṣṇu. A mass of radiance emanates, so brilliant that it is very hard to look at. Even one sun, we cannot look at! How can you look at a thousand suns? That is the language —very hard to look at. All around it is blazing like fire and sun, and is immeasurable. This is what I see everywhere, said Arjuna.

त्वमक्षरं परमं वेदितव्यं
त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम् ।
त्वमव्ययः शाश्वतधर्मगोप्ता
सनातनस्त्वं पुरुषो मतो मे ॥१८॥

Tvam akṣaram paramam veditavyam
tvam asya viśvasya param nidhānam;
Tvam avyayaḥ śāśvata dharma goptā
sanātanastvam puruṣo mato me — 11. 18

'You are the Imperishable, the supreme Being, the One thing to be known. You are the great Refuge of this universe; You are the undying Guardian of the Eternal *Dharma,* You are the ancient *Puruṣa,* I ween.'

This is a very beautiful spiritual expression. *Tvam akṣaram,* 'You are the imperishable'; *kṣara* means perishable, *akṣara* means imperishable. *Paramam,* 'supreme'; *veditavyam,* 'subject that is to be known'; if there is anything worth to be known, it is You—the highest subject that the human being has to know is God Himself who is the Self of all and of the universe. *Tvam asya viśvasya param nidhānam,* 'You are the supreme support and refuge of this whole universe', because in God alone this universe rests. So, God is called the 'refuge', *nidhānam.* Similarly, *tvam avyayaḥ śāśvata dharma goptā,* 'You are the imperishable, *avyaya*'; *vyaya* means 'spending' and *avyaya* means 'no spending'. Go on spending and yet the fund is full! That is called *avyaya;* it is not possible to exhaust it. So, *avyaya* is a great word in Sanskrit. *Śāśvata dharma goptā; goptā* means 'protector'; protector of what?, *śāśvata dharma,* 'Eternal Religion', which means *sanātana dharma,* the impersonal name that India gave to her religion. For example, cosmic law is one example of that eternal *dharma.* Sun is there, planets move around the sun. The earth also has a rotation on its own axis. In this way, the galaxies also move about. The whole universe has its various movements regulated. *Śāśvata dharma,* means 'cosmic or celestial *dharma*'. When you come to human life also, there is *śāśvata dharma* or eternal *dharma*. Other *dharmas* come and go; these scientifically-based *dharmas* remain. That is called *sanātana dharma.*

We have two aspects of *dharma* in our tradition: one is *sanātana dharma* and the other is *yuga dharma.* A *dharma* for a particular age, for a particular country, for a particular people, is called *yuga dharma*. They will be changing. One age changes and another age comes. So, you have got different *dharmas,* but within all this, there is one set of universal *dharma.* It never changes and it is called *sanātana,* 'eternal'. The other is called *yuga*

dharma. Because we understood this distinction, and because we allowed changes in the *yuga dharma* as *yugas* changed, we are a living culture. We never die away. We know how to adjust to new situations. About a hundred years ago, every male Hindu wore a *śikhā* or tuft of hair on the head. *Śikhā* is essential for a Hindu. Then came the modern age and we began to cut away the *śikhā.* So, some traditional people thought that *Sanātana Dharma* was getting destroyed by cutting away the *śikhā.* They used to say like that, not knowing the distinction between *Sanātana Dharma* and *Yuga Dharma*. That is something profound. These are changeful; so change them. 'Don't cross the sea!', is a *Yuga Dharma.* That *yuga* is over, and we now cross the sea.

In this way, hundreds of changes have come in our *Yuga Dharma.* A new *yuga* has come. The old practice has no relevance today. New things must take the place of the old. And Sri Ramakrishna gave us the entire *Sanātana-Dharma*-wisdom on the subject when he said, 'The Mogul coins have no currency under the (East India) Company's rule.' What a beautiful idea! It has gold value, but no currency value. You have to mint it in a new mint. That exactly is the nature of *Yuga Dharma.* It *must* change. If it doesn't change, it will distort the human society, because new ideas have come now, new economic situations have come. You have to adapt to the new ways. In this way, changes must take place around you. But, in the midst of changes, there are eternal values which do not change.

For example, take truth. There is no question of truth and truthfulness undergoing change. 'Truthfulness is an Eternal *Dharma*', *eṣa dharmaḥ sanātanaḥ. Gītā* will say, 'the Eternal Atman, our true nature, that is also *sanātana*'. Our relationship with the Divine is *sanātana.* I may not know, but that relationship *is* there and it is *sanātana;* it cannot change. So, we have *Sanātana Dharma* and *Yuga Dharma. Sanātana Dharma* is centred in the Upaniṣads, or the Vedas. *Yuga Dharma* is represented by the *Smṛtis* and the *Purāṇas.* They can be changing, must be changing; so many times they have changed. The *Smṛti* rule for many centuries was: 'no low-caste person should enter a Hindu temple.' That is not *Sanātana Dharma.* That was a *Yuga Dharma.* That *yuga* has gone. So, we opened the temple to all people, to people of low and high caste alike. And nobody suffered here; no civil war was here. In any other country, there would have been a civil war on

account of that change. So, remember, because of this distinction between *Sanātana Dharma* and *Yuga Dharma,* we could make changes without upheavals in society. A little bit of shouting here and there will be there. That cannot be escaped. But no serious upheaval, because we know that *that* is primary and *this* is only secondary. *That* is *sanātana* and *this* is *yuga,* meant for a particular time. And, therefore, the Upaniṣads remain eternal, from which you can always draw inspiration. They don't deal with *Yuga Dharma*—marriage, inheritance, food, drink, etc. These come in the *Smṛtis* and in the *Purāṇas.* There you find 'what you should do', 'what you should not do'. In the *Śrutis,* only beautiful ideas and great truths about the true nature of God, of human beings, of the relationship between the two, are given; and that is what Vedanta teaches. So, today, in India, a tremendous social change is taking place at the peripheral level, in our external life. More of such changes will come. We welcome them, but we will continue to hold on to those eternal values contained in the *Śruti*, in the Upaniṣads or Vedanta. A new India based on Vedantic inspiration is taking shape in India today, for the first time.

Look at our Republican Constitution. You will find beautiful Vedantic ideas, eternal values embedded there, whereas, all the discriminatory *Smṛti* values, which we had cultivated long, have been abrogated by the Constitution. Untouchability has been banned, casteism has been banned; all that you can see in the Constitution. So, the new Constitution gives you a new *Yuga Dharma,* a new *Smṛti* as it were. Follow *that!* The old rules are not to be followed hereafter. The day you adopted your Democratic Constitution, many of the old *Smṛtis* became absolutely irrelevant. They cannot function against the dictates of the Constitution. *That is the greatness of the culture and philosophy developed in this blessed country.* We know how to change according to time. What a social change has taken place from the *Ṛg*-Vedic India up to this day! And yet, we are the same people. One single current of unity runs through all of them. That is what all of us should understand. Many more changes will come. Within the next fifty years, tremendous changes will come. The status of women will be tremendously changed. Perfect equality, mutual respect, no subordination, will be there hereafter. Working class people will be given very high status. Working people are the noblest people—not the feudal lord sitting over

there, smoking *hookah* and enjoying nicely. These, the latter, are not going to continue to dominate the Indian society. So, be prepared for further social changes to come. But the whole thing comes gradually, without violence, without hatred. This is the nature of Indian society, and Indian wisdom dealing with social matters. Our orthodox national tradition itself says: *Śruti smṛti virodhe tu śrutireva garīyasi,* 'in a conflict between the *Śruti* and *Smṛti,* the *Śruti* alone shall prevail.' We will have the same India, we will have the same spiritual continuity, along with these socio-economic changes. That is the beauty—unity in diversity, change and eternity, both going on together.

So, *śāśvata dharma goptā,* 'you are the protector of this *śāśvata dharma,* this perennial *dharma*' going on ages after ages, still fresh! Imagine this country, 5000 years old, so young today! India is very young, democratically as well as ideologically. Quite young and yet it is 5000 years old. Therefore, the statement of that famous Bengali intellectual, Dr. Brajendranath Seal, is so true: 'India is ever ageing, but never old.' That is what 'Young India' is. We say 'Young India' today; it is not a mere saying. Swami Vivekananda started using that word—Young India—we are all young. There is a supreme Divine who protects this *śāśvata dharma.* That *śāśvata dharma* is there in the *Koran*, in the *Bible*, in every scripture. Only they did not make any distinction between *śāśvata dharma* and *aśāśvata dharma* or *yuga dharma.* They mixed them up all together. Here, we understood the distinction. That is the only difference. *Śāśvata Dharma* and *Smṛti Dharma,* you will find both these in the *Bible*, *Koran*, everywhere. But, India has something very special. We understood the distinction between the two. We had the boldness to change these *Yuga Dharmas.* No fear! Most wonderful changes we have effected. And we are perfectly fine. We are better and still better. That is the one lesson the rest of the world can learn from *Sanātana Dharma* experience. Islam must learn this lesson one day or the other. There, both are mixed together, combined together. That is why they say, our religion and politics are one; they have no separate existence. Therefore, religion becomes politicised. Islamic *Sanātana Dharma* becomes subordinate to its *Yuga Dharma.* In all such religions you will find this. But in India, our *Sanātana Dharma* controls and guides all

Yuga Dharma. This is one lesson you must particularly mark. You will understand India better, when you understand this distinction.

A Constitution without any provision for amendment will be a very difficult Constitution. That is the difficulty which other religions will learn slowly to cross over, and I am sure that the followers concerned will also adopt this Indian wisdom and make for necessary changes in the external life of its followers. But, its pure religious core will never suffer. Truth will never suffer. Islamic *sanātana dharma* will never suffer. The Sufis of Islam understood this distinction. But, they had to pay a heavy price. Many of them had to face death at the hands of orthodox priests who were not spiritual. The concept of change is not a modern conception; it is not a result of modern education. This is the accepted idea in the most orthodox *Sanātana Dharma* tradition. Today, we say, therefore, that untouchability has no sanction in the *Śruti;* it is only in the *Smṛti.* The *Śruti* says everybody is the same Atman. So, the whole nation, especially the educated section, voted for the removal of untouchability. They did not say, we will be destroying religion thereby. Our people must know these things. Then great strength will come. This one single expression in the *Gītā* is beautiful in this context*:* The Lord is the protector of *Śāśvata Dharma*—not only of Hindu, but of Muslim, Christian, all. He protects it. Nobody can destroy it. But, there are the peripheral aspects of religion—what dress you should wear, what food you should take, etc. In a particular climate, say in Kerala, even the Maharaja of Cochin used to wear only a single *dhoti* on his body! You can imagine a Maharaja in a *dhoti!* Whereas if you go to Kashmir, you have to put on so many garments. There is a different climate there. You can't make a law of this nature for all people for all time for all places. That is called *Yuga Dharma.* It must change. So, this is what the Indian mind, its great sages, understood ages ago, and so they put this wonderful wisdom in our culture. One *Yuga Dharma* will conflict with another *Yuga Dharma.* That is one trouble. But, *Sanātana Dharma* never conflicts with any other *dharma*—Islamic *Sanātana Dharma,* Christian *Sanātana Dharma,* Hindu *Sanātana Dharma.* But, *Yuga Dharmas* will always be in conflict with each other. All the distinctions come there. Our people received this wisdom from the past. That is why we are still alive all these five thousand years, in spite of so many political upheavals and socio-economic challenges. These

are profound pieces of wisdom coming from ancient times to modern times. So, the Lord is the infinite protector of the Eternal Religion, perennial religion.

Sanātanastvam puruṣo, 'You are also the *sanātana*, eternal Person'; the eternal Truth alone can protect the eternal religion. 'You are that *sanātana puruṣa,* Eternal Person', who protects this world, who protects the spirituality of the world. There are passages in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* where it is mentioned that the Divine Person is protecting the spiritual life of the whole earth. And, in India, that Divine Person protects India's spirituality by doing *tapas* at Badrinath temple in the Himalayas. That is a statement in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.* Nārāyaṇa is doing constant *tapas* at Badri to protect the spirituality of this great country. You will find such statements there.

Sanātana and *Śāśvata* mean the same thing. *Sanātanastvam puruṣo,* 'You are that *sanātana puruṣa*' and *Śāśvata dharma goptā,* 'You are the protector of the Eternal Religion'. *Mato me,* 'that is my understanding', said Arjuna.

Religions or sects come and go, but there is one Eternal Religion, whose protector is God Himself. Human-made religions come and go. God-made religions remain. That is the meaning of *Śāśvata Dharma* or *Sanātana Dharma.* In India, we have that distinction of human-made religion versus pure religion, ever-existing religion, based on the truths of the inner life. Dogmas and creeds can come from a human being; they cannot satisfy the heart of all human beings. If today they satisfy humanity, tomorrow they will not. So, they come and go. Many religions have come and gone. But there is a continuing religion based on truths about human beings, based on the science of human possibilities. That is what we call the *Sanātana Dharma.* This *Sanātana Dharma* is present in every world religion today. Only they do not recognize what is *sanātana* and what is temporary. We recognize that all the temporary aspects of our religion belong to the *Yuga Dharma, dharma* for a particular age, for a particular people; they come and go. We don't weep when they go. But the *Sanātana Dharma* remains. *Yuga dharma* deal with the most minute details of human life, binding each with rules and regulations. Such *dharmas* have changed again and again. But, the

one Eternal Religion remains because it consists of a set of verified Truths about human beings and is protected by the Divine Himself. That is the meaning of *śāśvata dharma goptā,* 'protector of the Eternal Religion'. That is the divine protector. All others are human-made.

Dealing with the term *śāśvata dharma goptā,* 'protector of the spiritual life of all human beings by the Supreme Being', and the concept of Bhārata as a *Puṇya bhūmi* or sacred land, the sixth century book, the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* says (V. xvii.14):

'In all these nine *varṣas* (continents), *Bhagavān* Nārāyaṇa (also known as Hari) is even today manifested in different forms in order to bless the inhabitants of these continents.'

Again (V. xix. 9):

'In the Bhārata Varṣa, the Lord, assuming simultaneously the twin form of Nara-Nārāyaṇa (the Human Being and the Supreme Divine Being) moves about unknown to any one. For the blessing of pious human beings out of mercy, He will live till the end of the *Kalpa* (one day of Brahmā, the Cosmic Person) revealing the true nature of the Atman through a life of austerity characterized by the highest morality, enlightenment, renunciation, power, self-control, and freedom from egoism.'

Again (V. xix. 21):

'So, the Divine beings (in heaven) sing as follows about the greatness of birth in Bhārata Varṣa:

'Is it because the auspicious acts done by them are of such transcendent merits, or is it because Śrī Hari has bestowed on them His unconditional grace, that these *jīvas* (souls) have obtained a birth in Bhārata Varṣa, where conditions are propitious for the practice of devotion to Śrī Hari? Would that we too obtain such birth in Bhārata!'

Again (V. xix. 28):

'If any more meritorious deeds remain in store for us after these enjoyments in heaven, may we, by virtue of these, be born in the blessed Ajanābha (an earlier name of Bhārata Varṣa) with our minds devoted to Thee.'

In the next verse of the *Gītā,* Arjuna says:

अनादिमध्यान्तमनन्तवीर्य-
मनन्तबाहुं शशिसूर्यनेत्रम् ।
पश्यामि त्वां दीप्तहुताशवक्त्रं
स्वतेजसा विश्वमिदं तपन्तम् ॥१९॥

Anādimadhyāntam ananta vīryam
ananta bāhum śaśi sūrya netram;
Paśyāmi tvām dīpta hutāśa vaktram
svatejasā viśvam idam tapantam — 11. 19

'I see You without beginning, middle or end, infinite in power, of manifold arms; the sun and the moon are Your eyes, the burning fire, Your mouth, heating the whole universe with Your radiance.'

Arjuna is praising that Universal Divine Form, viśva rūpa, shown by Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *Ādi-madhya-antam,* I see You 'without beginning, middle or end'; *ananta vīryam*, 'infinite in power'; and *ananta bāhum,* 'of manifold arms'; *śaśi sūrya netram,* 'the sun and the moon are Your two eyes'*; dīpta hutāśa vaktram,* 'the burning fire, Your mouth'; *svatejasā viśvam idam tapantam,* 'heating up the whole universe with Your radiance'.

द्यावापृथिव्योरिदमन्तरं हि
व्याप्तं त्वयैकेन दिशश्च सर्वाः ।
दृष्ट्वाऽद्भुतं रूपमुग्रं तवेदं
लोकत्रयं प्रव्यथितं महात्मन् ॥२०॥

Dyāvāpṛthivyoridam antaram hi
vyāptam tvayaikena diśaśca sarvāḥ;
Dṛṣṭvā'dbhutam rūpam ugram tavedam
lokatrayam pravyathitam mahātman — 11. 20

'This space betwixt heaven and earth and all the quarters are filled by You alone; having seen this, Your marvellous and awful Form, the three worlds are trembling with fear, O Great-souled One.'

Your Form is filling up everything; from the earth to far off space. And all the quarters are filled by You alone. Having seen this marvellous and awful Form of the Divine, the three worlds are trembling with fear.

अमी हि त्वां सुरसङ्घा विशन्ति
केचिद्भीता: प्राञ्जलयो गृणन्ति ।
स्वस्तीत्युक्त्वा महर्षिसिद्धसङ्घा:
स्तुवन्ति त्वां स्तुतिभि: पुष्कलाभि: ॥२१॥

Amī hi tvām surasaṅghā viśanti
kecidbhītāḥ prāñjalayo gṛṇanti;
Svastītyuktvā maharṣi siddha saṅghāḥ
stuvanti tvām stutibhiḥ puṣkalābhiḥ — 11. 21

'Verily, into You enter these hosts of *Devas;* some extol You in fear with joined palms; "May it be well!" thus saying, bands of great *Ṛṣis* and *Siddhas* praise You with splendid hymns.'

Similarly, *amī hi tvām surasaṅghā viśanti,* 'into Your mouth enter all these hosts of *Devas*'. 'They are entering into Your mouth' means that they are getting swallowed up by death. *Kecit bhītāḥ prāñjalayo gṛṇanti,* 'some extol You in fear with joined palms'. *Svasti iti uktvā maharṣi siddha saṅghāḥ,* 'May it be well! May it be well! Saying so, bands of great *Ṛṣis* and *Siddhas'; stuvanti tvām stutibhiḥ puṣkalābhiḥ,* 'praise You with splendid hymns'.

रुद्रादित्या वसवो ये च साध्या
विश्वेऽश्विनौ मरुतश्चोष्मपाश्च ।
गन्धर्वयक्षासुरसिद्धसङ्घा
वीक्षन्ते त्वा विस्मिताश्चैव सर्वे ॥२२॥

Rudrādityā vasavo ye ca sādhyā
viśve'śvinau marutaścoṣmapāśca;
Gandharva yakṣāsura siddhasaṅghā
vīkṣante tvām vismitāścaiva sarve — 11. 22

‘The *Rudras, Ádityas, Vasus, Sādhyas, Viśva-devas,* the two *Aśvins, Maruts, Uṣmapās,* and hosts of *Gandharvas, Yakṣas, Asuras,* and *Siddhas*— all these are looking at You, all quite astounded.’

We have in our theology all these divine entities— *Rudras, Ádityas, Vasus, Sādhyas, Viśva-devas,* the two *Aśvins, Maruts, Uṣmapās*. These are all divine entities. Also there are hosts of *Gandharvas, Yakṣas, Asuras,* and *Siddhas. Vīkṣante tvām,* ‘they all look on You’, *vismitāścaiva sarve,* ‘with wonder, amazement’.

रूपं महत्ते बहुवक्त्रनेत्रं
महाबाहो बहुबाहूरुपादम् ।
बहूदरं बहुदंष्ट्राकरालं
दृष्ट्वा लोकाः प्रव्यथितास्तथाहम् ॥२३॥

Rūpam mahatte bahu vaktara netram
mahābāho bahu bāhu uru pādam;
Bahūdaram bahu damṣṭrākarālam
dṛṣṭvā lokāḥ pravyathitāḥ tathāham — 11. 23

‘Having seen Your immeasurable Form—with many mouths and eyes, O mighty-armed, with many arms, thighs, and feet, with many stomachs, and fearful with many tusks—the worlds are terrified, and so am I.’

‘So am I’! Arjuna is also adding himself as one terrified on looking at the world as a unity. Since we have two eyes each, and there are many billions of people, there are many billions of eyes. So, it is said ‘many mouths, many eyes’, etc. The whole universe is seen as one. And there is one Reality, the universal Form, the *Vīrāṭ svarūpa* as we call it in Sanskrit. *Virāṭ* means the universal. The other is *vyakti,* ‘individual’. We see only *vyakti;* we see a few *vyaktis*. Our vision cannot comprehend the totality of the universe. Here is that vision given to Arjuna and ultimately it frightens him. What a terrible thing it is! The whole world in this Form. ‘I am also frightened’, says Arjuna. *Dṛṣṭvā lokāḥ pravyathitāḥ,* ‘seeing which the whole world is frightened’; *tathā aham,* ‘so am I’. ‘I am also very much frightened’.

नभ:स्पृशं दीप्तमनेकवर्णं
व्यात्ताननं दीप्तविशालनेत्रम् ।
दृष्ट्वा हि त्वां प्रव्यथितान्तरात्मा
धृतिं न विन्दामि शमं च विष्णो ॥२४॥

Nabhaḥspṛśam dīptam aneka varṇam
vyāttānanam dīpta viśāla netram;
Dṛṣṭvā hi tvām pravyathitāntarātmā
dhṛtim na vindāmi śamam ca viṣṇo — 11. 24

'On seeing You touching the sky, shining in many a colour, with mouths wide open, with large fiery eyes, I am terrified at heart, and find no courage nor peace, O Viṣṇu.'

Nabhaḥspṛśam, 'touching the sky'. This particular phrase from the *Gītā* has been adopted by the Indian Air Force as its motto. *Dīptam,* 'brilliant'; *aneka varṇam,* 'with many colours'; *vyātta ānanam,* 'with mouth wide open'; *dīpta viśāla netram,* 'with vast and shining eyes'; *dṛṣṭvā hi tvām pravyathita antarātmā,* 'seeing You, the inner self is frightened'; *dhṛtim na vindāmi,* 'I am not getting any courage'; *śamam ca,* 'I am not getting also peace'; *viṣṇo,* 'O Viṣṇu!'.

दंष्ट्राकरालानि च ते मुखानि
दृष्ट्वैव कालानलसन्निभानि ।
दिशो न जाने न लभे च शर्म
प्रसीद देवेश जगन्निवास ॥२५॥

Damṣṭrākarālāni ca te mukhāni
dṛṣṭvaiva kāla anala sannibhāni;
Diśo na jāne na labhe ca śarma
prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa — 11. 25

'Having seen Your mouths, fearful with tusks, (blazing) like *Pralaya*-fires, I know not the four quarters, nor do I find peace; have mercy, O Lord of the *Devas,* O Abode of the universe.'

‘Blazing like *Pralaya*-fires’ is an important idea. At the time of dissolution, there will be a tremendous fire. The whole world will be enveloped in that fire. In today’s astrophysics, this sun will become expanded and still expanded, and then it will swallow all the planets of the solar system. That is one of the theories there. Similarly, other systems also. At the time of dissolution, there will be *kāla anala,* ‘the Fire of Time’. That will envelope all things of the universe. ‘I know not the four quarters’, north, east, west or south. ‘Nor do I find peace; have mercy.’ Arjuna is frightened and he is asking for peace from the Divine.

अमी च त्वां धृतराष्ट्रस्य पुत्राः
सर्वे सहैवावनिपालसङ्घैः ।
भीष्मो द्रोणः सूतपुत्रस्तथासौ
सहास्मदीयैरपि योधमुख्यैः ॥२६॥

Amī ca tvām dhṛtarāṣṭrasya putrāḥ
sarve sahaivāvanipālasaṅghaiḥ;
Bhīṣmo droṇaḥ sūtaputrastathāsau
sahāsmadīyairapi yodhamukhyaiḥ — 11. 26

‘All these sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra with hosts of monarchs, Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Sūtaputra, with the warrior-chiefs of ours…’

वक्त्राणि ते त्वरमाणा विशन्ति
दंष्ट्राकरालानि भयानकानि ।
केचिद्विलग्ना दशनान्तरेषु
संदृश्यन्ते चूर्णितैरुत्तमाङ्गैः ॥२७॥

Vaktrāṇi te tvaramāṇā viśanti
damṣṭrākarālāni bhayānakāni;
Kecidvilagnā daśanāntareṣu
samdṛśyante cūrṇitairuttamāṅgaiḥ — 11. 27

‘Enter precipitately into Your mouth, terrible with tusks and fearful to behold. Some are found sticking in the interstices of Your teeth, with their heads crushed to powder.’

A very important statement comes here. What is to happen in the war ahead is being told here. The host of monarchs and warrior chiefs are rushing towards Your mouth to be swallowed up; that is the language. *Damṣṭrākarālāni,* 'full of tusks' and other teeth; *bhayānakāni*, 'fearful to behold', and these teeth will be chewing everything. Nothing will be left. It is put here in human language. *Kecit vilagnā daśanāntareṣu samdṛśyante cūrṇitaiḥ uttamāṅgaiḥ,* 'some of them have been chewed. They are just left in between the teeth. Here and there some pieces are remaining, pieces of some of these mighty warriors'—meaning thereby that they are all entering into death. That is put in a blazing language. Even their best forms are being pounded and chewed and caught up between the teeth. That is the picture given.

Earlier, just before the war began, in the *Mahābhārata*, there occurs a verse (*Udyoga Parva*, 126. 31, Bhandarkar edition). Bhīṣma, seeing the critical condition, tells Śrī Kṛṣṇa, 'Kṛṣṇa, I find that the whole of these Kauravas and all others are rushing into the mouth of Time, mouth of Death. They can't escape, it so appears to me.' Probably, today's Delhi Duradarshan *Mahābhārata* serial also made this remark—Bhīṣma telling Dhṛtarāṣṭra that the whole Kaurava race is going to be ruined. We have sent these Pāṇḍavas to the forest. And this ruin of the Kaurava race is going to happen. And he became very much upset. Dhṛtarāṣṭra's blind attachment for his son Duryodhana, blinds him to everything. Bhīṣma says there, *Kālapakvam idam manye sarva kṣatram janārdana,* 'Janārdana! The whole of the *kṣatra, kṣatriya* groups, is *kālapakvam,* ready or ripe for Time', to be eaten up by Time.

यथा नदीनां बहवोऽम्बुवेगाः
समुद्रमेवाभिमुखा द्रवन्ति ।
तथा तवामी नरलोकवीरा
विशन्ति वक्त्राण्यभिविज्वलन्ति ॥२८॥

Yathā nadīnām bahavo'mbuvegāḥ
samudram eva abhimukhā dravanti;
Tathā tavāmī nara loka vīrā
viśanti vaktrāṇyi abhivijvalanti — 11. 28

‘Verily, as the many torrents of rivers flow towards the ocean, so do those heroes in the world of men enter Your fiercely flaming mouths.’

Just like rivers with tremendous flow rush to get lost in the sea, similarly, these heroes in the world are entering Your fiercely flaming mouths. This is what is happening just now. None can stop it. It just goes on.

यथा प्रदीप्तं ज्वलनं पतङ्गा
विशन्ति नाशाय समृद्धवेगाः ।
तथैव नाशाय विशन्ति लोका-
स्तवापि वक्त्राणि समृद्धवेगाः ॥२९॥

Yathā pradīptam jvalanam pataṅgā
viśanti nāśāya samṛddha vegāḥ;
Tathaiva nāśāya viśanti lokāḥ
tavāpi vaktrāṇi samṛddha vegāḥ — 11. 29

‘As moths precipitately rush into a blazing fire only to perish, even so do these creatures also precipitately rush into Your mouth only to perish.’

Another example is taken. Moths, when they see fire, rush into it only to get destroyed there. Similarly, these creatures also rush into Your mouth to perish. God has two aspects, the protecting aspect and the destroying aspect. Both are the same, life and death. Both are parts of the Divine. We forget one part. We think it is only life. But life *and* death constitute Reality. So, all these living creatures are now rushing towards death. Nobody can resist it.

लेलिह्यसे ग्रसमानः समन्ता-
ल्लोकान्समग्रान्वदनैर्ज्वलद्भिः ।
तेजोभिरापूर्य जगत्समग्रं
भासस्तवोग्राः प्रतपन्ति विष्णो ॥३०॥

Lelihyase grasamānaḥ samantāt
lokān samagrān vadanairjvaladbhiḥ;

Tejobhirāpūrya jagat samagram
bhāsastavogrāḥ pratapanti viṣṇo — 11. 30

‘Swallowing all the worlds on every side with Your flaming mouths, You are licking Your lips. Your fierce rays, filling the whole world with radiance, are burning, O Viṣṇu.’

A most gruesome description is given: *grasamāṇaḥ samantāt lokān samagrān,* ‘swallowing all the worlds on every side’; *vadanaiḥ jvaladbhiḥ lelihyase,* ‘with Your flaming mouths, You are licking Your lips.’ It is just like licking the blood on the lips when one bites one’s lips. Further, *tejobhirāpūrya jagat samagram bhāsaḥ tava ugrāḥ,* ‘Your fierce rays, filling the whole world with radiance’; *pratapanti viṣṇo,* ‘are burning, O Viṣṇu’.

आख्याहि मे को भवानुग्ररूपो
नमोऽस्तु ते देववर प्रसीद ।
विज्ञातुमिच्छामि भवन्तमाद्यं
न हि प्रजानामि तव प्रवृत्तिम् ॥३१॥

Ákhyāhi me ko bhavān ugrarūpo
namo’stu te devavara prasīda;
Vijñātum icchāmi bhavantam ādyam
na hi prajānāmi tava pravṛttim — 11. 31

‘Tell me who You are, fierce in form. Salutation to You, O supreme *Deva,* have mercy. I desire to know You, O Primeval One. I know not indeed Your purpose.’

Arjuna is in a very humble state of mind. He is asking the Lord, *ākhyāhi me ko bhavān ugrarūpo,* ‘who are You, O Lord, please tell me about this wonderful fierce form of Yours.’ *Namo’stu te devavara prasīda,* ‘salutations to You, O Great among gods; be peaceful or gracious.’ *Vijñātum icchāmi bhavantam ādyam,* ‘I would like to know Your origin.’ *Na hi prajānāmi tava pravṛttim,* ‘I am unable to understand Your activities.’ Your actions are something beyond comprehension.

Now comes Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s own words.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'Śrī Bhagavān said:'

कालोऽस्मि लोकक्षयकृत्प्रवृद्धो
लोकान्समाहर्तुमिह प्रवृत्तः ।
ऋतेऽपि त्वा न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे
येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः ॥३२॥

Kālo'smi lokakṣayakṛt pravṛddho
lokān samāhartum iha pravṛttaḥ;
Ṛte'pi tvām na bhaviṣyanti sarve
ye'vasthitāḥ pratyanīkeṣu yodhāḥ — 11. 32

'I am the mighty world-destroying Time, here made manifest for the purpose of infolding the world. Even without you, none of the warriors arrayed in the hostile armies shall live.'

I am Time that comes to consume everything. *Lokakṣayakṛt,* 'that which consumes the entire world'; that is called *Kāla.* Now, *pravṛddhaḥ,* 'it has become very active'; *iha pravṛttaḥ,* 'is functioning here'; *lokān samāhartum,* 'to destroy this world'. *Ṛte'pi tvām na bhaviṣyanti sarve,* 'even without you none will survive'; *ye'vasthitāḥ pratyanīkeṣu yodhāḥ,* 'these hostile armies present here.' They are all marked for consumption by death.

तस्मात्त्वमुत्तिष्ठ यशो लभस्व
जित्वा शत्रून् भुङ्क्ष्व राज्यं समृद्धम् ।
मयैवैते निहताः पूर्वमेव
निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन् ॥३३॥

Tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva
jitvā śatrūn bhuṅkṣva rājyam samṛddham;
Mayaivete nihatāḥ pūrvam eva
nimittamātram bhava savyasācin — 11. 33

‘Therefore, do you arise and acquire fame. Conquer the enemies, and enjoy unrivalled dominion. Verily, by Myself have they been already slain; be you merely an instrument, O Arjuna.’

Remember, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling this just before the battle begins, in the midst of the battlefield. Arjuna wanted to withdraw from battle. He became weak, grief-stricken, as we saw in the last verse of the first chapter and Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s immediate response in the second and third *ślokas* of the second chapter. Here is Śrī Kṛṣṇa again giving Arjuna a message of strength: *tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha,* ‘therefore, you raise yourself’, don’t lie down, weak, helpless. Stand up, Arjuna! *Yaśo labhasva,* ‘acquire the glory’ which belongs to every true human being. Facing obstacles, facing difficulties, facing death itself, try to achieve something great in life. That is the message of the *Gītā.* When you do great things, you get glory. You might have to fight against death itself; what does it matter? We know there is death. We are going to fight it. We shall fight and get destroyed, but by so doing we shall acquire the great glory of manliness. This is the philosophy that will create heroes in a society—not any goody-goody philosophy leading to comfort, pleasure and laziness. This is called the greatness of tragedy. Life is a tragedy. A tragic hero will face extreme pressures and difficulties. But, he or she will face them and will face death courageously, doing something great. This is called heroic philosophy. The world is a world of death. It is a battlefield. Every day there is dying here, dying there. If we have to die at all, why not die doing some great work? That is the challenge. Why die in a bed? A *kṣatriya* is not expected to die in a bed. That was the rule in ancient India. Die in the battlefield; die in the field of work, in the struggle for serving weaker sections. We had been given this heroic philosophy which we, except a few, forgot during the last few centuries. We sought for a cosy, comfortable life. That made us low and almost dead. One death is there, and before that death comes another death. That is what the great Shakespeare referred to in *Julius Caesar* (Act II. Scene II):

‘Cowards die many times before their deaths; The valiant never taste of death but once.’

That valiant attitude is the central message of the *Gītā.* Be a hero in every department of life. You need not be a soldier in the army to be a hero. An average citizen can be a hero. Great works one can do. Take a boy who rescues another boy from drowning. And the Government of India gives a prize to him. It is really beautiful. He has done a really heroic act. So, there are hundreds and thousands of occasions when our life can show that heroic impulse. We had rejected this philosophy long ago, became very small, petty-minded. We wanted only a cosy, comfortable life. That has ruined us. So, death comes to us in a thousand ways. But, if you are a hero, it will come only once. You are fighting against death itself. That makes a tragic hero. The Greek tragedies speak of this tragic hero. Even in the *Mahābhārata*, there are many tragic heroes. They knew things were going bad, but they would face them. 'We will die, we don't care. We will stick to our own ideas.' That kind of thinking was there. Karṇa, a great hero, knew towards the end that he was a brother of the Pāṇḍavas. But being brought up by Duryodhana, his determination was, 'I belong to his side. I will fight only for him and for nobody else. I don't mind dying.' There are so many occasions when one will be called upon to show the real strength that is within.

A very ordinary life—eating, drinking, begetting and passing away one day—is an animal life. It does not bear that heroic touch. Swami Vivekananda always emphasized that India should develop that heroic touch. 'Your country needs heroes. Be heroes,' he had said. And in that heroic philosophy, suffering is no problem. We are prepared to face suffering. A soldier faces death every second, and that spirit must come to the citizen also; it is not merely for the soldier. This is how we develop greatness as a people. Leading a comfortable life cannot make any nation great.

So, if Śrī Kṛṣṇa's words are put into today's context, this will be the meaning. *Tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha,* 'all of you, citizens of India, stand up.' *Yaśo labhasva,* 'develop that manliness which is the glory of humanity.' Without that manliness, there is no glory. Our lives would then be like that of petty animals, like sheep, bleating all the time. That is not what we need. We want that lion which roars, full of strength. The whole forest can feel the touch of one lion. How to do that? *Jitvā śatrūn,* 'overcome your enemies.'

Arjuna's enemies were the Kauravas. Our enemies are different. Our enemies are poverty, backwardness, injustice in society. These are our enemies. Fight them. Every citizen must rise up, face them, and then overcome them. And then? *Bhuṅkṣva rājyam samṛddham,* 'enjoy life in this prosperous country of ours.' If we overcome poverty, backwardness, insanitary conditions, if all villages are fine and clean, and if we are economically healthy, what a pleasure it would be to live in such a society! All the slums have gone, the dwellers have all been rehabilitated, and they have work to do. If we achieve this kind of development by our united efforts, what a joy it will be to live on this earth! *Bhuṅkṣva rājyam samṛddham,* 'enjoy your prosperous country'. That is called happy, glorious, human life on earth; it is far better than life in a heaven, as has been repeatedly mentioned in the *Gītā*. Then, Śrī Kṛṣṇa adds: *mayaivete nihatāḥ pūrvam eva,* 'I have already destroyed these enemies' of the nation. India will become great in the modern age—that is the message of the time spirit. *Nimittamātram bhava savyasācin,* 'you be merely the instrument for that actual achievement.' Destiny says, 'India shall be great. India shall overcome its poverty and backwardness.' That is the dictate of the modern age. The Lord has already spoken that way. You only be the instrument for achieving it for your own greatness and glory. *Nimittamātram bhava savyasācin,* can apply to every one of us. Be an instrument for this great purpose—to build up India, its economy, its society, its politics, and develop a progressive, social system and democratic state, and work devotedly for international peace. What a happy life we will have then! What happy human relationships we shall have. No crime, no corruption, everybody healthy. You can keep your doors open all the time. Nobody will touch anything with the idea of stealing. These are not utopian ideas. Sometimes our nation had achieved this. It is the dictate of the age. You be the instrument for bringing about this situation. This is what the destiny of India whispers to every citizen.

This applies to the international field as well. This modern age is whispering to everyone of us, 'We shall break down barriers to neighbourliness. We shall create a one-world where humanity will feel oneness with each other. A happy world we shall have.' This also is the meaning of the statement of Śrī Kṛṣṇa uttered five thousand years ago, to

men and women of today. Don't say it is my fate to live in a disorganised country or the world. Never! *Uttiṣṭha!* 'Stand up!' Śrī Kṛṣṇa always uses this word. Get up! Don't remain lying down, weeping all the time. Stand up! Why did our *satyāgrahis* go and face the bullets of the foreign power and got injured or killed? That is glory. We very much respect them today. Where is that spirit gone? Your main enemies are not outside. But, there are plenty of enemies within. How much injustice, how much top to bottom corruption, how much of cheating, how many similar evil things we are now having! We have to expose all of them, correct them, create a healthy public opinion to face and overcome them. How can there be a free democracy, if a woman cannot move freely and fearlessly in the streets at night and work freely in offices, without being molested, without their honour being protected? Where is freedom then? Freedom will be only for the powerful. That will be a bad India. If people do not protest against these things, you will have worse conditions coming in the future. Here is a *Mahābhārata* verse giving one aspect of a healthy society (*Śānti Parva*, 12. 68. 32, Bhandarkar Edition):

Striyaścāpuruṣā mārgam sarvālaṅkāra bhūṣitāḥ;
Nirbhayāḥ pratipadyante yadā rakṣati bhūmipaḥ —

'Where there is a healthy political state'—remember that expression, *a healthy political state*—'in that state, women, with many ornaments on the body, can pass fearlessly through the lanes and streets of cities, towns and villages of that state, without being accompanied by a male member'.

That is called a healthy society. Woman is to be treated as a person recognising her rights. Without her consent, nothing can be done on her. If you have number of people with this attitude filling a society, that society is healthy. But, today it is not so. We are far, far away from that condition, because many in India are inactive, without value awareness, and feudal in outlook. 'Let the trouble come to me and then I shall see. When the trouble comes to others, I do not mind.' This is the way in which we have been thinking for a thousand years. When a foreigner invaded one of our states, we thought, 'Let him come to my state and then I shall attend to it', instead of joining together to expel the foreign invader. We never did that. Once or twice, small attempts have been made. Soon it fizzled out. So, this attitude

is destructive. We have already suffered plenty. Now there is the awakened, democratic, political conscience. If there is any injustice, we have to join together immediately, and protest against it. And injustice becomes less and less. Without protest, no injustice can be destroyed. Don't think that the government alone will be able to destroy injustice. Government, as it is now, is inclined more often to protect the evil doers and the corrupt ones. Our democracy must become more alive, more alert, and more active. Then we will get a healthy government.

In many countries this problem has been there. Once the people become awake, very few governments can withstand that pressure. In Western democracies, because people are educated, nobody can do that much evil to the people as we find here in India. So, they are much more free from this kind of feudal power exercised by a government. We have also to get general education for all our people; at least up to class 8. Then they will understand their inner strength, their own power, their own political personality status. Then governments cannot do whatever they like, good or evil. But now they can do whatever they like because there is no strong, widespread, independent public opinion. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving this message to all the people, even of today. Conditions are different now. Arjuna had only one single war, but here it is a day-to-day war against corruption, injustice and oppression. But the message is the same: Awake and overcome your enemies and enjoy life in a prosperous India—*jitvā śatrūn bhuṅkṣva rājyam samṛddham.*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's message is always strengthening and purifying. The whole Vedantic message is of fearlessness and strength. In no other philosophy will you find this wonderful idea of fearlessness and strength as a central note. That is Vedanta—*abhayam,* 'fearlessness'. In the later chapters of the *Gītā*, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa describes the *daivī sampat,* 'divine qualities of the human being', He lists *abhayam,* 'fearlessness' as the first *sampat* or wealth.

द्रोणञ्च भीष्मञ्च जयद्रथञ्च
कर्णं तथाऽन्यानपि योधवीरान् ।
मया हतांस्त्वं जहि मा व्यथिष्ठा

युध्यस्व जेतासि रणे सपत्नान् ॥३४॥

Droṇañca bhīṣmañca jayadrathañca
karṇam tathānyānapi yodhavīrān;
Mayā hatāmstvam jahi mā vyathiṣṭhā
yudhyasva jetāsi raṇe sapatnān — 11. 34

'Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Jayadratha, Karṇa as well as other brave warriors—these, already killed by Me, do you kill. Be not distressed with fear; fight, and you shall conquer your enemies in battle.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is finally telling Arjuna: this Droṇa, this Bhīṣma, this Karna—pointing out to them—and then Jayadratha, a very powerful ruler of Sind who had done a lot of wicked deeds. A hundred sons and one daughter were born to Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Jayadratha was the husband of that only daughter in the Kaurava family. That ruler of Sind, Jayadratha, had abducted Draupadi in the forest and had got punished by the Pāṇḍavas.

Tathānyānapi yodhavīrān, 'and all other great heroes of battle'; *mayā hatān,* 'they have already been killed by Me.' I, the supreme Divine as Time, have already consumed them. *Tvam jahi*, 'do you conquer them'; *mā vyathiṣṭhā,* 'be not distressed with fear'; *yudhyasva*, 'fight on!' *Jetāsi raṇe sapatnān,* 'in this battle, you will win all these enemies eventually.'

सञ्जय उवाच —

Sañjaya uvāca —

'Sañjaya said:'

Sañjaya is describing the story.

एतच्छ्रुत्वा वचनं केशवस्य
कृताञ्जलिर्वेपमानः किरीटी ।
नमस्कृत्वा भूय एवाह कृष्णं
सगद्गदं भीतभीतः प्रणम्य ॥३५॥

Etacchrutvā vacanam keśavasya
kṛtāñjalirvepamānaḥ kirīṭī;

Namaskṛtvā bhūya evāha kṛṣṇam
sagadgadam bhītabhītaḥ praṇamya — 11. 35

'Having heard this speech of Keśava (i.e. Śrī Kṛṣṇa), the diademed one (Arjuna), with joined palms, trembling, prostrated himself, and again addressed Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a choked voice, bowing down, overwhelmed with fear.'

Etat śrutvā vacanam keśavasya, 'hearing these words of Śrī Kṛṣṇa'; *kṛtāñjaliḥ vepamānaḥ kirīṭī,'kirīṭī* or Arjuna, shivering as it were, and with hands saluting Śrī Kṛṣṇa'; *namaskṛtvā,* 'and also bowing to Him'; *bhūya eva āha kṛṣṇam,* 'again spoke to Śrī Kṛṣṇa'; *sagadgadam*, 'with a voice full of emotion'. That gurgling sound comes whenever you are emotionally charged. Your speech will then be *sagadgadam. Bhītabhītaḥ,* 'full of fear'; *praṇamya,* 'saluting him.'

अर्जुन उवाच—

Arjuna uvāca —

'Arjuna said:'

स्थाने हृषीकेश तव प्रकीर्त्या
जगत्प्रहृष्यत्यनुरज्यते च ।
रक्षांसि भीतानि दिशो द्रवन्ति
सर्वे नमस्यन्ति च सिद्धसङ्घाः ॥३६॥

Sthāne hṛṣīkeśa tava prakīrtyā
jagat prahṛṣyatyanurajyate ca;
Rakṣāmsi bhītāni diśo dravanti
sarve namasyanti ca siddhasaṅghāḥ — 11. 36

'It is quite proper, O Hṛṣīkeśa, that the world is delighted and rejoices and praises You, that *Rākṣasas* fly in fear to all quarters and all the hosts of *Siddhas* bow down to You in adoration.'

Arjuna said, 'it is only proper, O Śrī Kṛṣṇa, that the world is delighted and rejoices in Your praise. *Rākṣasas* fly in fear in all directions'. *Rākṣasas* are types of human beings with no moral sense. They have energy, they

have power, but they have no moral sense. They can do any evil. That is the nature of *Rākṣasa* type. So, human beings are *Rākṣasas* when they have these qualities—trying to destroy others, their welfare, their power. So, *Rākṣasas* are mentioned here as flying in all directions out of fear. And all the hosts of *Siddhas* bow down to You in adoration. *Siddhas* are another type of semi-divine beings, who are well disposed, and so they are bowing down to You in adoration.

कस्माच्च ते न नमेरन्महात्मन्
गरीयसे ब्रह्मणोऽप्यादिकर्त्रे ।
अनन्त देवेश जगन्निवास
त्वमक्षरं सदसत्तत्परं यत् ॥३७॥

Kasmācca te na nameran mahātman
garīyase brahmaṇo'pyādikartre;
Ananta deveśa jagannivāsa
tvam akṣaram sadasattatparam yat — 11. 37

'And why should they not, O Great-souled One, bow to You, greater than, and as the Primal Cause, of even Brahmā, O Infinite Being, O Lord of the *Devas*, O Abode of the universe? You are the Imperishable, the Being and the non-Being, (as well as) That which is beyond (them).'

Kasmācca te na nameran, 'O, why should not they adore You?' asks Arjuna. *Mahātman,* 'O Great Soul!' *Garīyase,* 'You are superior to'; *brahmaṇopi ādikartre,* 'and the Primal cause of even that Brahmā who is the original creator of this universe'. *Ananta deveśa,* 'Infinite Lord of all beings, of all *devas*'; *jagannivāsa,* 'Abode of the universe'. He is not only outside, He is also inside. The universe lives in You, O Kṛṣṇa. *Tvam akṣaram,* 'You are the imperishable One', *sat asat tatparam yat*, 'You are the cause and the effect and also what is beyond cause and effect'; *sat* is effect, *asat* is cause. What cannot be seen is called *asat.* The cause cannot be seen and so it is *asat*. *Sat* is what can be seen, the effect. So, 'You are the effect and cause, and what is beyond both of them'.

त्वमादिदेवः पुरुषः पुराण-

स्त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम् ।
वेत्ताऽसि वेद्यं च परं च धाम
त्वया ततं विश्वमनन्तरूप ॥३८॥

Tvam ādidevaḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇaḥ
tvamasya viśvasya param nidhānam;
Vettāsi vedyam ca param ca dhāma
tvayā tatam viśvam anantarūpa — 11. 38

'You are the primal *Deva,* the ancient *Puruṣa.* You are the supreme Refuge of this universe, You are the Knower, and the (One Thing to be) Known. You are the supreme Goal. By You is the universe pervaded, O You of boundless Form.'

Tvam ādidevaḥ puruṣaḥ, 'You are the primal divine Person'; the first among all the gods, *ādideva,* 'primary, primordial divine Being'; that *puruṣa,* 'Person', You are. *Purāṇaḥ,* 'most ancient'. *Tvamasya viśvasya param nidhānam,* 'You are the supreme refuge of this *viśva,* i.e. this universe'; *vettāsi vedyam ca,* 'You are the Knower, and You are the Known'. See the language! *Vettā* means 'Knower'. *Vedyam* means 'the Known'. You are the Knower and the Known. Only in that state this experience can come. I am the Knower of this world, but I am *not* the world. But in my true nature, I am *both* the Knower and the Known. *Param ca dhāma*, 'that supreme State also You are'. *Tvayā tatam viśvam*, 'by You is the whole universe pervaded'. *Anantarūpa,* 'of infinite Form'—that is Your true nature.

वायुर्यमोऽग्निर्वरुण: शशाङ्क:
प्रजापतिस्त्वं प्रपितामहश्च ।
नमो नमस्तेऽस्तु सहस्रकृत्व:
पुनश्च भूयोऽपि नमो नमस्ते ॥३९॥

Vāyuryamo'gnirvaruṇaḥ śaśāṅkaḥ
prajāpatistvam prapitāmahaśca;
Namo namaste'stu sahasrakṛtvaḥ

punaśca bhūyo'pi namo namaste — 11. 39

'You are Vāyu or air, Yama, Agni or fire, Varuṇa, the Moon, Prajāpati, and the Great-grand-father. Salutation, salutation to You, a thousand times, and again and again salutation, salutation to You!'

You are Vāyu, Yama, Agni, Varuṇa, the Moon, Prajāpati, and the Great-grand-father. Brahmā is the grand father, and the Divine Lord is called *prapitāmahaḥ,* 'the Great-grand-father'. Salutations, salutations to You! Again and again, salutations, salutations to You. A thousand times salutations, and again and again, salutations! Full of divine fervour! Arjuna is not able to express his devotion enough through words. So, he says merely, 'a thousand salutations to You! '

नमः पुरस्तादथ पृष्ठतस्ते
नमोऽस्तु ते सर्वत एव सर्व ।
अनन्तवीर्यामितविक्रमस्त्वं
सर्वं समाप्नोषि ततोऽसि सर्वः ॥४०॥

Namaḥ purastād atha pṛṣṭhataste
namo'stu te sarvata eva sarva;
Anantavīrya amitavikramastvam
sarvam samāpnoṣi tato'si sarvaḥ — 11. 40

'Salutations to You before and behind, salutation to You on every side, O the All! You, infinite in power and infinite in prowess, pervade all; wherefore You are All.'

Namaḥ purastād, 'salutations to You in front' of me. But, He is not only in the front. *Atha pṛṣṭhataste,* salutations 'to You behind also'. *Namo'stu te sarvata eva sarva,* 'salutations to You everywhere, and the All'. *Anantavīrya amita vikramastvam,* 'You are endowed with *ananta vīrya,* infinite energy, and *vikramaḥ,* of heroic actions.' *Sarvam samāpnoṣi,* 'You envelop everything'; *tato'si sarvaḥ,* 'therefore, You are everything'. See the language! You envelop everything, therefore, You are everything. This manifested universe is the adorable Brahman only. That is based on the

verse (II.ii.11) of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad: Brahmaivedam viśvamidam variṣṭham.*

The next verse is a beautiful one. Arjuna is now feeling that he has not been fully aware of the greatness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa; till now he had taken Him to be His friend only. But now he finds Him to be an extraordinary person, so great, so divine. So, he is expressing his repentance in the next two verses.

सखेति मत्वा प्रसभं यदुक्तं
हे कृष्ण हे यादव हे सखेति ।
अजानता महिमानं तवेदं
मया प्रमादात्प्रणयेन वापि ॥४१॥

Sakheti matvā prasabham yaduktam
he kṛṣṇa he yādava he sakheti;
Ajānatā mahimānam tavedam
mayā pramādāt praṇayena vāpi — 11. 41

'Whatever I have presumptuously said from carelessness or affection, addressing You as "O Kṛṣṇa, O Yādava, O friend", regarding You merely as a friend, unconscious of this Your greatness.'

I have been related to You all these years as a friend. I 'treated You as a friend'—*sakheti matvā*. Thinking of You as a *sakhā* or friend, what did I do? *Prasabham yaduktam,* 'carelessly have I said'; *he kṛṣṇa, he yādava, he sakhe*, 'O Kṛṣṇa, O Yādava, O Friend!' How could I do so? *Ajānatā mahimānam tavedam,* 'not knowing Your *mahimā* or greatness of this nature'. I was utterly ignorant of this tremendous majesty of Yours. I took You to be like myself; or, *mayā pramādāt,* 'through my delusion'; or *praṇayena vāpi,* 'out of love', comradely love, I have taken liberties with You.

यच्चावहासार्थमसत्कृतोऽसि
विहारशय्यासनभोजनेषु ।
एकोऽथवाप्यच्युत तत्समक्षं
तत्क्षामये त्वामहमप्रमेयम् ॥४२॥

Yaccāvahāsārtham asatkṛto'si
vihāra śayyāsana bhojaneṣu;
Eko'thavāpyacyuta tat samakṣam
tat kṣāmaye tvām aham aprameyam — 11. 42

'In whatever way I may have been disrespectful to You in fun, while walking, reposing, sitting, or at meals, when alone (with You), O Acyuta, or in company—I implore You, O immeasurable One, to forgive all this.'

Tat kṣāmaye tvām, 'please forgive me' for all this, says Arjuna. What are these? *Yat ca avahāsārtham asatkṛto'si,* 'what I have spoken to You in fun and in frolic'; sometimes making fun of You, merely without knowing Your greatness, I have been disrespectful to You. A very interesting admission at this stage—*vihāra śayyā āsana bhojaneṣu,* 'while walking, reposing, sitting, or at meals'; *ekaḥ athavā api,* 'also when alone with You'. In all these situations, I took You to be my friend. That is all. And I behaved accordingly. Now I find that the whole thing was wrong. You are so great, so majestic, and I was ignorant of it till now. Please forgive me, O immeasurable One, for all these childish pranks of mine towards You. Arjuna is great, but Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the greatest. But, Arjuna behaved with Śrī Kṛṣṇa as friends equal in age. That is also very interesting. In the *Mahābhārata,* you find many passages of that friendly nature. Arjuna and Śrī Kṛṣṇa mean one soul in two bodies. That is the nature of their relationship. Now Arjuna finds that the whole thing is different.

पितासि लोकस्य चराचरस्य
त्वमस्य पूज्यश्च गुरुर्गरीयान् ।
न त्वत्समोऽस्त्यभ्यधिक: कुतोऽन्यो
लोकत्रयेऽप्यप्रतिमप्रभाव ॥४३॥

Pitāsi lokasya carācarasya
tvamasya pūjyaśca gururgarīyān;
Na tvatsamo'styabhyadhikaḥ kuto'nyo
lokatraye'pyapratimaprabhāva — 11. 43

'You are the Father of the world, moving and unmoving; the object of its worship, greater than the great. None else exists who is equal to You in

the three worlds; who then can excel You, O You of power incomparable?'

Pitāsi lokasya carācarasya, 'You are the Father of this universe of moving and unmoving things'; *tvamasya pūjyaśca,* 'You are also the most adorable One' in the universe; *gururgarīyān,* 'highly venerable *Guru* of this world'. *Na tvat samo asti,* 'there is none equal to You'; *abhyadhikaḥ kuto'nyo,* 'who else can be superior to You?' There is none equal to You; how then can there be anyone superior to You? *Lokatraye'pi,* 'in the three *lokas* or worlds', You are supreme. *Apratima-prabhāva,* 'Your energy, Your glory is incomparable'. There is no second one of this nature.

Arjuna is understanding this dimension of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Now you are reading all this in this eleventh chapter. And actually Arjuna is seeing this vision. Later on, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will withdraw this vision. And the old relationship will continue. Here is an interval, an interregnum as it were. In fact, you are just about to see the beginning of the Kurukṣetra war in the *Udyoga Parva* of the *Mahābhārata.* And, just when Śrī Kṛṣṇa was to go as the ambassador of the Pāṇḍavas to the Kaurava court to plead for peace between the two parties, Sañjaya was sent by Dhṛtarāṣṭra to go to the Pāṇḍava camp and see how things were going on. Sañjaya entered Arjuna's camp and he was surprised to see Arjuna lying down with his legs in the lap of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. What sign could be more illustrative of the intimate relationship that existed between them than that! As soon as he saw it, Sañjaya returned and said to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, 'your Duryodhana has no hope of winning this war. He is gone. If Arjuna can place his feet on the lap of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with such intimacy, and as Śrī Kṛṣṇa is so powerful, how can the Kauravas win?'

You get such illustrations even hereafter. This is just an interregnum. Because he wanted to see the divine Form, Śrī Kṛṣṇa showed it to him. And Arjuna will say a little later, 'I don't want to see this Form any more! I want to see that familiar form of Yours.' Then, Śrī Kṛṣṇa shows His familiar form. Very often, when we are not fit to have a divine experience or vision, we begin by wanting to see it, and once we get it, we are fed up with it, and we say, 'please take it back!' Even today, people do not know this and they say, 'I want the vision of God.' But, if the vision of God comes to you, you will have to wind up all your business. You can't do anything in that state.

That is quite possible. The manager of the Dakshineswar temple, Mathur Babu, prayed to Sri Ramakrishna: 'Please give me the divine vision. I have been serving you as the manager of the temple, and of the big estate of its creator, Rāṇi Rāṣmaṇi.' Sri Ramakrishna consoled him saying, 'it will come in the right time'. But again and again, Mathur Babu requested him. Then, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Mother, let him have some vision.' Within a short time, Mathur Babu was beyond himself in some divine experience—always going about weeping, smiling, always having mystical experiences. One day, two days, three days passed in this way, with his business at a standstill. No work was proceeding. And he felt this. Then he came to Sri Ramakrishna and said, 'Please take back all these visions. All my business is suffering. I cannot have this anymore.' Sri Ramakrishna said: 'I told you so. Spiritual experience will come at the right time. Don't press for it.' And he took back that vision from him. So, you can see this kind of thing happening in spiritual life, which people do not realize and they say: 'I want this, I want that.' It will come in time. We have to build up our spiritual life step by step. The nervous system must get the capacity to bear these experiences. Otherwise, there will be a breakdown. These are all truths about spiritual life. So, a steady development is the best. Somebody got 'it', I also must get 'it'—that is not correct. So, here Arjuna is in that condition: 'There is none equal to You in the three worlds', says Arjuna.

तस्मात्प्रणम्य प्रणिधाय कायं
प्रसादये त्वामहमीशमीड्यम् ।
पितेव पुत्रस्य सखेव सख्यु:
प्रिय: प्रियायार्हसि देव सोढुम् ॥४४॥

Tasmāt praṇamya praṇidhāya kāyam
prasādaye tvām aham īśam īḍyam;
Piteva putrasya sakheva sakhyuḥ
priyaḥ priyāyārhasi deva soḍhum — 11. 44

'So prostrating my body in adoration, I crave Your forgiveness, Lord adorable! As a father forgives his son, a friend a dear friend, a beloved one (forgives) his object of love, even so should You forgive me, O *Deva*.'

Finally, he submits with this statement: 'Prostrating my body in adoration, I crave Your forgiveness, O Lord adorable. As a father forgives his son, a friend forgives his dear friend, a beloved forgives his beloved one, even so should You forgive me, O Lord.' That is a beautiful expression of Arjuna.

अदृष्टपूर्वं हृषितोऽस्मि दृष्ट्वा
भयेन च प्रव्यथितं मनो मे ।
तदेव मे दर्शय देव रूपं
प्रसीद देवेश जगन्निवास ॥४५॥

Adṛṣṭapūrvam hṛṣito'smi dṛṣṭvā
bhayena ca pravyathitam mano me;
Tadeva me darśaya deva rūpam
prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa — 11. 45

'Overjoyed am I to have seen what I never saw before; yet my mind is distracted in terror. Show me, O *Deva,* only that (familiar) Form of yours. Have mercy, O Lord of *Devas,* O Abode of the universe.'

Adṛṣṭapūrvam hṛṣito'smi dṛṣṭvā, 'I am overjoyed to have seen what I have never seen before'; *bhayena ca pravyathitam mano me*, 'yet my mind is distracted with fear'. The whole thing is causing fear. *Tadeva me darśaya deva rūpam,* 'show me that old divine Form alone'; *prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa,* 'O Lord of the Universe, be gracious.' *Deveśa* means 'Lord of all the *devas*.' *Prasīda* means 'have mercy.' What kind of form does Arjuna want to see again?

किरीटिनं गदिनं चक्रहस्त-
मिच्छामि त्वां द्रष्टुमहं तथैव ।
तेनैव रूपेण चतुर्भुजेन
सहस्रबाहो भव विश्वमूर्ते ॥४६॥

Kirīṭinam gadinam cakrahastam
icchāmi tvām draṣṭum aham tathaiva;
Tenaiva rūpeṇa caturbhujena

sahasrabāho bhava viśvamūrte — 11. 46

'Diademed, bearing a mace and a discuss, I desire to see You as before. Assume that same four-armed Form, O You of thousand arms and of universal Form.'

Viśvamūrte, 'O You of universal Form'; *sahasrabāho,* 'O one with thousand arms'. Please withdraw this Form and show me the old Form. What is that old Form? *Kirīṭinam gadinam cakrahastam,* the usual picture of Viṣṇu with *kirīṭa, gada* and *cakra*, 'with crown, and with mace and discus in hand'. *Icchāmi tvām draṣṭum aham tathaiva,* 'this is what I like to see'. *Sahasra bāho,* 'O one of thousand hands!' *Tenaiva rūpeṇa caturbhujena,* 'show Yourself to me in that divine Form with four hands'.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said:'

मया प्रसन्नेन तवार्जुनेदं
रूपं परं दर्शितमात्मयोगात् ।
तेजोमयं विश्वमनन्तमाद्यं
यन्मे त्वदन्येन न दृष्टपूर्वम् ॥४७॥

Mayā prasannena tavārjunedam
rūpam param darśitam ātmayogāt;
Tejomayam viśvam anantam ādyam
yanme tvadanyena na dṛṣṭapūrvam — 11. 47

'Graciously have I shown to you, O Arjuna, this Form supreme, by My own *yoga* power, this resplendent, primeval, infinite, universal Form of Mine, which hath not been seen before by anyone else.'

Through My *ātma-yoga,* I have shown you this, My divine Form. I was pleased with you; *mayā prasannena,* 'out of My grace' I have shown this to you. *Tejomayam,* 'full of brilliance'; *viśvam anantam ādyam,* 'the universal, infinite, primordial'. *Yat me tvat anyena na dṛṣṭapūrvam,* 'nobody else other than you has seen this before'.

न वेदयज्ञाध्ययनैर्न दानै-
र्न च क्रियाभिर्न तपोभिरुग्रैः ।
एवंरूपः शक्य अहं नृलोके
द्रष्टुं त्वदन्येन कुरुप्रवीर ॥४८॥

Na veda yajñādhyayanaiḥ na dānaiḥ
na ca kriyābhiḥ na tapobhirugraiḥ;
Evam rūpaḥ śakya aham nṛloke
draṣṭum tvad anyena kurupravīra — 11. 48

'Neither by (the study of) the Vedas and *Yajña,* nor by gifts, nor by rituals, nor by severe austerities, am I, in such Form, seen in the world of human beings, by any other than you, O great hero of the Kurus.'

Nobody has been able to see this before. No kind of sacrifice, ceremony, ritual, can help you to realize Me in this Form. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna, 'Neither by (the study of) the Vedas, nor by *Yajñas,* nor by gift, nor by ritual, nor even by severe austerities, am I in this Form seen in this world, by anyone other than you, O great hero of the Kurus.' You are a unique person to have seen this Form.

मा ते व्यथा मा च विमूढभावो
दृष्ट्वा रूपं घोरमीदृङ्ममेदम् ।
व्यपेतभीः प्रीतमनाः पुनस्त्वं
तदेव मे रूपमिदं प्रपश्य ॥४९॥

Mā te vyathā mā ca vimūḍha bhāvo
dṛṣṭvā rūpam ghoramīdṛṅmamedam;
Vyapetabhīḥ prīta manāḥ punastvam
tadeva me rūpam idam prapaśya — 11. 49

'Be not afraid nor bewildered, having beheld this Form of Mine, so terrific. With your fears dispelled and with gladdened heart, now see again this former Form of Mine.'

Mā te vyathā, ‘don’t have fear or sorrow.’ *Mā ca vimūḍha bhāvo,* ‘also don’t be deluded’. *Dṛṣṭvā rūpam ghoram īdṛṅmamedam,* ‘by seeing this type of *ghora rūpa* of Mine’, this terrible Form of Mine. Give up all fear and delusion. *Vyapetabhīḥ,* ‘free from all *bhaya* or fear’; *vyapeta* means ‘without’; *prīta manāḥ,* ‘with mind pleased’; *punaḥ*, ‘again’; *tadeva me rūpamidam tvam prapaśya,* ‘do you see this, that former Form of Mine’, which you wanted to see.

सञ्जय उवाच —

Sañjaya uvāca —

‘Sañjaya said:’

इत्यर्जुनं वासुदेवस्तथोक्त्वा
स्वकं रूपं दर्शयामास भूयः ।
आश्वासयामास च भीतमेनं
भूत्वा पुनः सौम्यवपुर्महात्मा ॥५०॥

Ityarjunam vāsudevaḥ tathoktvā
svakam rūpam darśayāmāsa bhūyaḥ;
Áśvāsayāmāsa ca bhītam enam
bhūtvā punaḥ saumyavapuḥ mahātmā — 11. 50

‘So, Vāsudeva, i.e. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, having thus spoken to Arjuna, showed again His own Form; and the Great-souled One, assuming His gentle Form, pacified him who was terrified.’

So, Vāsudeva, that is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, having thus spoken to Arjuna, again showed him His own Form. And the Great-souled One, assuming His gentle Form, pacified him who was terrified. He showed him, *saumyavapuḥ,* ‘that pacified Form’, that gentle Form.

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca —

‘Arjuna said:’

दृष्ट्वेदं मानुषं रूपं तव सौम्यं जनार्दन ।
इदानीमस्मि संवृत्तः सचेताः प्रकृतिं गतः ॥५१॥

Dṛṣṭvedam mānuṣam rūpam tava saumyam janārdana;
Idānīm asmi samvṛttaḥ sacetāḥ prakṛtim gataḥ — 11. 51

'Having seen this Your gentle human Form, O Janārdana, my thoughts are now composed, and I am restored to my natural state.'

Dṛṣṭvedam mānuṣam rūpam tava saumyam, 'seeing this, Your gentle human Form'. See the beauty! For a human being, if God comes in a human Form, it will be easier to appreciate. A human being will not be able to appreciate at all some divine or terrible Form. That is why God takes, once in a while, a human Form called a Divine incarnation for the satisfaction of devotees. 'O Janārdana, my thoughts are now composed. I am restored to my original state.' That is Arjuna's reply: 'I see a human form now. All fear is gone.'

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said:'

सुदुर्दर्शमिदं रूपं दृष्टवानसि यन्मम ।
देवा अप्यस्य रूपस्य नित्यं दर्शनकाङ्क्षिणः ॥५२॥

Sudurdarśamidam rūpam dṛṣṭavānasi yanmama;
Devā apyasya rūpasya nityam darśana kāṅkṣiṇaḥ —11. 52

'Very hard indeed it is to see this Form of Mine which you have seen. Even the *devas* or gods ever long to behold this Form.'

Sudurdarśam idam rūpam, 'extremely difficult is it to see this Form' which I showed to you. 'Even gods in heaven are hankering to see that Form', *devā api asya rūpasya nityam darśana kāṅkṣiṇaḥ*.

नाहं वेदैर्न तपसा न दानेन न चेज्यया ।
शक्य एवंविधो द्रष्टुं दृष्टवानसि मां यथा ॥५३॥

Nāham vedairna tapasā na dānena na cejyayā;
Śakya evam vidho draṣṭum dṛṣṭavān asi mām yathā — 11. 53

‘Neither by the Vedas, nor by austerity, nor by gifts, nor by sacrifice can I be seen as you have seen Me.’

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is now telling: *Nāham vedaiḥ,* ‘Neither by the study of the Vedas’; *na tapasā,* ‘nor by austerity’; *na dānena,* ‘nor by gifts’; *na ca ijyayā,* ‘nor by sacrifice’; *śakya evam vidho draṣṭum,* ‘can I be seen like this’; *dṛṣṭavān asi mām yathā,* ‘as you have seen Me.’ Then by what means can one see You? The next *śloka* makes this clear.

भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवंविधोऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परन्तप ॥५४॥

Bhaktyā tvananyayā śakya aham evamvidho’rjuna;
Jñātum draṣṭum ca tattvena praveṣṭum ca parantapa —11. 54

‘But by single-minded devotion I may be known in this Form, O Arjuna —and to know, to see, and truly to enter into (Me), O scorcher of foes.’

Only through *Bhakti* can one realize Me in this Form. What kind of *bhakti? Bhaktyā ananyayā,* ‘through one-pointed devotion’. *Jñātum draṣṭum ca,* ‘to know Me, to see Me’; *tattvena,* ‘as I am truly’; *praveṣṭum ca,* ‘and to enter into Me’, to become one with Me. Only that *bhakti* can help you in this matter. That is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said earlier, *teṣām jñāni nitya-yukta,* ‘among them, the *jñāni* is *nitya-yukta,* ever devoted to the Divine’; his or her knowledge is fixed on the Divine. So also, the *bhakta’s bhakti,* this kind of *ekānta-bhakti, ananya-bhakti,* is fixed in the Divine. There is no other way.

Now comes the last verse of this chapter. And this verse is introduced by Śaṅkarācārya with a beautiful remark in his commentary:

Adhunā sarvasya gītā śāstrasya sārabhūto artho niḥśreyasārtho anuṣṭheyatvena samuccitya ucyate;

Ucyate, ‘it is said’ by Śrī Kṛṣṇa; *adhunā,* ‘now’, in this last verse of this chapter; *sarvasya gītā śāstrasya sārabhūto artho,* ‘the essential meaning of the whole *Gītā śāstra*’; *niḥśreyasārtho,* ‘that is capable of taking us to the

highest *mokṣa* or spiritual liberation'; *anuṣṭheyatvena,* 'a thing one has to practise and live by'; *samuccitya,* 'by summing it up'.

It is said that the *Gītā* is the essence of all the Upaniṣads. And this *śloka* is the essential meaning of the *Gītā,* to be practised in day-to-day life. If only we keep to these few practical instructions of this 55th verse, nothing more is needed. And it is so simple. *Bhakti* is always simple. Our misfortune is that many people do not want simple things. The more complicated you make things, the happier they are. Anybody can follow these simple teachings. What are they?

मत्कर्मकृन्मत्परमो मद्भक्तः सङ्गवर्जितः ।
निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ॥५५॥

Matkarmakṛtmatparamo madbhaktaḥ saṅgavarjitaḥ;
Nirvairaḥ sarvabhūteṣu yaḥ sa māmeti pāṇḍava —11. 55

'One who does work for Me alone and has Me for his or her goal, is devoted to Me, is free from sensory attachment, and bears no enmity towards any being—he or she attains to Me, O Pāṇḍava.'

A very simple *śloka. Mat karma kṛt,* 'a doer of actions for Me'; whatever actions you do, do it as an offering for Me. You are working in an office, treat that as serving the Lord. Working in the household, you are serving the Lord. It is a fact. If the whole universe is His Form, any work that one does is service to Him. *Mat paramo,* 'keep Me as the supreme Goal'; everything else is secondary, and God is the primary goal. That is why those who keep God as the supreme Goal, don't go to ecstasy when they get a little remark of appreciation, a little title, a little promotion; these are nothing. The greatest thing is this *bhakti*. *Mad bhaktaḥ,* 'be My devotee'; the only relation between you and Me is pure love. *Saṅga varjitaḥ,* 'free from any sensory attachment'; free the mind from various attachments. Attachments will go, but love will remain. You may be detached from your friend, but you will be loving your friend; detached from the wife, but will love and serve the wife. That distinction we must know. Detachment does not mean becoming apathetic to things around you. That is not the meaning of detachment. 'I don't care. Children are weeping

there, I don't care. I have no attachment.' That is not detachment. Love is there, but no attachment is there. My child and another child—both are the same. I am going to look after that child also if necessary. So, it is an expansion, not a contraction. Without any attachment, but with only pure love. *Then comes an important teaching of jñāna and bhakti: Nirvairaḥ sarvabhūteṣu,* 'with no hatred towards any beings'. There is no difficulty about it. Why should I hate? There is the same Self in all beings. A little thinking will give us that conviction. *Yaḥ,* 'he or she who is such'; *saḥ mām eti pāṇḍava,* 'such a person attains to me, O Arjuna'. This is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's promise, and is also the essence of all the teachings in the *Gītā.*

This is what Indians and people all over the world must learn today—a religion which finds expression in high character. No hatred towards anybody; only love for all; with a detached mind. What a beautiful idea! Good work we do, but offer it to the Divine. I don't claim anything for myself. So, in this way, these are all practicable things and I wish more and more people will understand and practise religion as given in this *śloka.* This is the greatest *śloka* of a great chapter. *Bhagavān* Himself expresses it. So, the whole chapter ends with this note of *bhakti* in this last *śloka.* And the next chapter is all on *bhakti.* It is the *Bhakti-yoga* chapter. A little bit of *bhakti* you get in the 15th chapter also. Finally, you get *bhakti* again, in the 18th chapter.

इति विश्वरूपदर्शन-योगो नाम एकादशोऽध्यायः ।

Iti viśvarūpadarśana-yogo nāma ekādaśo'dhyāyaḥ —

'So, this is the eleventh chapter named, *The Vision of the Universal Form* of *Bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa.'

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 12

Bhakti-Yoga
The Way of Devotion

We enter now the 12th chapter. It begins with a question from Arjuna.

अर्जुन उवाच –

Arjuna uvāca—

'Arjuna said:'

एवं सततयुक्ता ये भक्तास्त्वां पर्युपासते।
ये चाप्यक्षरमव्यक्तं तेषां के योगवित्तमा:॥१॥

Evam satatayuktā ye bhaktāstvām paryupāsate;
Ye cāpyakṣaramavyaktam teṣām ke yogavittamāḥ —12. 1

'Those devotees who, ever-steadfast, thus worship You, and those also who worship the Imperishable, the Unmanifested—which of them is better versed in *Yoga?*'

In many places in the previous chapters of the *Gītā,* Śrī Kṛṣṇa has referred to worship of the divine Person through *Bhakti* and also adoration of the Impersonal Brahman through *Jñāna.* Yet, Arjuna brings both these together, asking which is better. *Evam satatayuktā ye*, 'one who is thus constantly devoted to You'; *bhaktāḥ tvām paryupāsate,* 'those devotees who worship You'; and *ye cāpi akṣaram avyaktam,* 'those who adore God in the form of *akṣaram avyaktam*, i.e., imperishable and unmanifest', that is *nirguṇa brahman*; *teṣām ke yogavittamāḥ,* 'among these two who is the better *yogī?*' That is Arjuna's question.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said:'

मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते।
श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मता:॥२॥

Mayyāveśya mano ye mām nitya yuktā upāsate;
Śraddhayā parayopetāḥ te me yuktatamā matāḥ —12. 2

'Those who, fixing their mind on Me, worship Me, ever-steadfast, and endowed with supreme *Śraddhā* or faith, they, in My opinion, are the best versed in *Yoga*.'

Here is a general statement. *Mayyāveśya mano ye mām,* 'those who fix their mind on Me'; *nityayuktā upāsate,* 'worship Me with constant devotion'; *śraddhayā parayopetāḥ,* 'with supreme *śraddhā*'; *parayā* means 'supreme'; supreme *śraddhā* is there in that worship. *Te me yuktatamā matāḥ,* 'they are considered by Me to be *yuktatamāḥ*'; *yukta* means 'a *yogī*'; *tama* means 'supreme'; of *tara* and *tama* in Sanskrit, *tara* is 'more' and *tama* is 'most'; *yuktatara,* in the comparative degree, and *yuktatama,* in the superlative degree. So they are the best of devotees according to My opinion, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa here.

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यमव्यक्तं पर्युपासते।
सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यं च कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवम्॥३॥

Ye tu akṣaram anirdeśyam avyaktam paryupāsate;
Sarvatragam acintyam ca kūṭastham acalam dhruvam—12. 3

'But, those who worship the Imperishable, the Indefinable, the Unmanifested, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the Unchangeable, the Immovable, the Eternal.'

On the other hand, 'those who worship', *paryupāsate,* that *akṣaram,* 'the Imperishable Reality'; *anirdeśyam,* 'which cannot be pointed out' as this or that; this is not an object to be pointed out. It is beyond name and form. *Avyaktam,* 'the Unmanifest'. This world is manifest, That is unmanifest. That Impersonal Brahman, *sarvatragam,* 'which is everywhere'; *acintyam ca,* 'and beyond all thought'; we cannot conceive of that Divine. When we conceive of It, we get only a conception; we don't get God Himself. With every effort at conceiving God, we get a conception and

not God Himself. This is a very profound observation of Vedanta. Nowhere else do we find this, except among a few Christian and Sufi mystics. They have understood this truth that we cannot *capture* God through our thought, through our speech. It is beyond all this.

So, in our *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā,* there is a beautiful *śloka* (XII. 7)*:*

Acintyam cintyamāno'pi cintārūpam bhajatyasau—

'When you think of the Unthinkable, you get only a form of thought.' You think of the Unthinkable; what do you get? You get a piece of thought. So, don't *think* of Brahman. Be Brahman. Realize Brahman. You are That. You are That. That is not an object like a table or chair, to be pointed out, with a name and a form, etc. That is the nature of that Imperishable Reality.

संनियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः।
ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः॥४॥

Sanniyamyendriyagrāmam sarvatra samabuddhayaḥ;
Te prāpnuvanti māmeva sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ— 12. 4

'Having subdued all the senses, even-minded everywhere, engaged in the welfare of all beings—verily, they reach Me only.'

How do they worship That? *Sanniyamya indriyagrāmam*, by 'disciplining all the five sense organs'*; sarvatra samabuddhayaḥ,* 'all around, they have a *sama-buddhi,* equal vision'; no high or low, everything is the same—men, women, everything; that, we have to practise. *Te prāpnuvanti mām eva,* 'they achieve Me only'; *sarvabhūta hite ratāḥ,* 'and they are constantly engaged in doing good to every being.' They have nothing of their own to seek. These *jñānis,* they serve happiness and engage in welfare of all people. That is the *Jñāna* path, a valid path. *Jñāna* and *Bhakti,* both are valid, but a little difference is there and that will come in the next verse.

क्लेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम्।
अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिरवाप्यते॥५॥

Kleśo'dhikataraḥ teṣām avyaktāsakta cetasām;

Avyaktā hi gatirduḥkham dehavadbhiḥ avāpyate — 12. 5

'Greater is their trouble whose minds are set on the Unmanifested; for the goal of the Unmanifested is very hard to be reached by the embodied.'

Fixing the mind on the *avyakta* is *kleśa,* 'very difficult', painful; it is not easy. We can understand it for ourself. Let us think of the Impersonal. We can't find where or how to fix the mind on It. *Kleśo'dhikataraḥ teṣām,* 'to them the *kleśa* is more'. To whom? *Avyaktāsakta cetasām,* 'whose mind is attached to the *avyakta*, the Imperishable Brahman'. *Avyaktā hi gatirduḥkham dehavadbhiḥ avāpyate,* 'those who have this human-body-consciousness, to them the path of the *avyakta* is extremely painful, difficult.' When we give up the consciousness of the body, then we can do it. But that will not come easily. Whenever body-consciousness comes, we need to think of God as with form, as a Person. Then we can worship Him accordingly. So, with great *duḥkham,* 'difficulty', we can follow that path, whereas, this *bhakti* is easy. This is simple; to think of God as with form. We can worship Him in any form we like. He appears to us in that form. It is the same Brahman that comes in the form of this Divine Personality. *Dehavadbhiḥ* is a very important word. In Advaita *Jñāna* the first thing to achieve is to know that 'I am not the body'. You see, how difficult it is to practise 'I am not this body'! So, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'people speak of *avyakta,* Brahman and the Impersonal Reality, etc., not knowing that just a little slip and they will come down.' So, he used to say, because you have the *deha* or body, the *deha* pulls you down to this world of duality. That is why, only in deep *samādhi*, when no body-consciousness is there, can we be in that state. But even then, if the body goes wrong, there is a tendency in it to pull the mind down. That is why *bhakti* is the universal form of religion all over the world. Only a handful of people are capable of taking to that *Jñāna* path, and they have taken to it, they have realized it as a valid path; but everybody should not try that path in which success is very limited.

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्पराः।
अनन्येनैव योगेन मां ध्यायन्त उपासते॥६॥

Ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi sannyasya matparāḥ;

Ananyenaiva yogena mām dhyāyanta upāsate —12. 6

'But those who worship Me, resigning all actions in Me, regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, meditating on Me with single-minded *yoga,*'

तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात्।
भवामि न चिरात्पार्थ मय्यावेशितचेतसाम्॥७॥

Teṣāmaham samuddhartā mṛtyusamsārasāgarāt;
Bhavāmi na cirāt pārtha mayyāveśita cetasām — 12. 7

'… To these whose mind is set on Me, verily, I become ere long, O son of Pṛthā, the Saviour out of the ocean of the mortal *Samsāra.*'

Śri bhagavān Himself says here, *ye tu,* 'however, those who'; *sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi sannyasya,* 'renouncing all their actions to Me'; *matparāḥ,* 'keeping Me as their Supreme Goal'; *ananyenaiva yogena,* 'through that *ananya-yoga* or one-pointed devotion'; *mām dhyāyanta upāsate,* 'worship Me through meditation on Me'; *teṣām,* 'to such persons'; *aham samuddhartā bhavāmi,* 'I become the instrument to lift them up' from worldliness. What kind of worldliness?, *mṛtyu samsāra sāgarāt,* 'this *samsāra sāgara* or ocean of worldliness, consisting of birth and death'; that is compared to an ocean. I lift up such persons from that ocean. *Bhavāmi,* 'I become', the instrument for lifting them up from all this *samsāra,* because they are devoted to Me. They are working hard towards their spiritual development. *Na cirāt,* 'very soon', not too late; *cira* means 'late'; *na cira* means 'not too late'; that means 'early'; *pārtha,* 'O Arjuna'; *mayyāveśita cetasām,* 'all those whose *cetas* or *citta* or mind-stuff is *āveśita* or set in Me.' Therefore, I take it as My responsibility to lift them from their samsāric life. This is how the *bhakti* religion is presented as easier; most people can achieve something worthwhile in this life itself. The Lord is there; He is a Person; we can speak to Him; and He can respond also. He will be described in the fifteenth chapter as *Puruṣottama,* Supreme Person. We are *puruṣas,* He is *Puruṣottama.* That will come later on.

So, here is the wonderful teaching of *bhakti-yoga.* Very beautiful ideas come. How to be a devotee? We say, 'God, God, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa,' but nothing happens to us. A response must come from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. That is what

Tulsi Das said, 'I say Rāma, Rāma, but nothing happens to me. If Rāma could once say, "Tulsi, Tulsi", I will be saved quickly!' But how to make Him say so? That is our work. That is called the *bhakti* path.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us in this chapter that the path of *jñāna* or knowledge is very difficult for those who have body consciousness, *dehātma-buddhi.* Therefore, the path of *bhakti* is meant for all. We work out our *samskāras* through our actions by dedicating them to the Divine. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in this *śloka: Teṣāmaham samuddhartā bhavāmi,* 'I become their redeemer'; from what?, *mṛtyu samsāra sāgarāt,* 'from this ocean of mortal *samsāra*'; from this we get freedom by realizing our own true nature which is birthless and deathless. The body alone dies, not the Atman. We are able to get that knowledge through this practice of *bhakti* with devotion to the Divine. As we practise like this, we develop that spiritual awareness and that spiritual strength step by step. So, *bhakti* is placed before us because it is easy for us to perform. If *jñāna* has to begin with the consciousness that 'I am not this body', then we shall have to wait till eternity, till that body-consciousness goes away. So, the majority of people in all countries are followers of *bhakti,* and many great *bhaktas* in all parts of the world have realized the Divine and they have realized the joy of spiritual freedom. They have communicated that joy to others through their songs, through their writings. And so, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is speaking here about this path of *bhakti* as easier for us to accomplish step by step. Sri Ramakrishna also says: The *jñāni* must wipe away all attachments of the senses. But, how can you wipe it away like that? That attachment is very much there. So, Sri Ramakrishna said to a *bhakta*, there is no need to wipe it away. We gently give it a turn to the Divine. He said in Bengali, *moḍ phiriye dāo,* 'turn the direction'; then, we slowly overcome them. In this way, *bhakti yoga* has been expounded in various scriptures as the easier path for men and women. In the following verse of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* in the 11th book, there is a description: A person who has not much attachment to the world, nor is he or she endowed with high renunciation, can achieve perfection through *bhakti,* by hearing about the Lord, even by chance. He or she was just passing by, and by chance, hears a discourse going on, sits there, and hears beautiful ideas about God and love of God or devotion. Somehow that person's heart responds to it. From that day, he or she becomes a devotee. Such a one may

not have become pure, nor become a man or woman of renunciation; still lot of attachment is there. But, it does not matter; he or she has started on the journey to God. The first step has been taken. If one continues on the path one will realize the highest *bhakti* in this very life (XI. xx. 8):

Yadṛcchayā matkathādau
jātaśraddhastu yaḥ pumān;
Na nirviṇṇo nātisakto
bhaktiyogo'sya siddhidaḥ —

To such people, *bhakti yoga* becomes *siddhidaḥ,* 'the giver of *siddhi* or realization'. What kind of people? *Yadṛcchayā matkathādau jātaśraddhastu yaḥ pumān,* 'by chance, he or she heard talks about Me, and his or her heart became attracted to the spiritual life, to the love of God.' *Na nirviṇṇo,* 'he or she has not the high spirit of renunciation'; *nātisakto,* 'nor is he or she intensely attached to the worldly life'; *bhakti yogo asya siddhidaḥ,* 'to all such people, *bhakti yoga* will lead them gently on to the highest realization.'

So, here we continue with verse 8 of the *Gītā:*

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय।
निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः॥८॥

Mayyeva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhim niveśaya;
Nivasiṣyasi mayyeva ata ūrdhvam na samśayaḥ — 12. 8

'Fix your mind on Me only; place your intellect in Me; then you shall, no doubt, live in Me alone hereafter.'

Mayyeva mana ādhatsva, 'let your mind rest in Me only'. Train your mind to rest in God. *Mayi buddhim niveśaya,* 'let your intellect also enter into Me'. That is the right place for it. *Buddhi* is reason, discrimination; that *buddhi* must be coloured by the touch of the Divine. Then only it becomes a positive force in life. *Nivasiṣyasi mayyeva ata ūrdhvam,* 'after the body is destroyed at death, you will certainly live in Me alone.' You have a *sūkṣma śarīra* along with this *sthūla śarīra*. The *sthūla śarīra* or gross body goes away at the time of death. But the *sūkṣma śarīra* or subtle body lives in the Divine. That is the language. *Na samśayaḥ,* 'there is no doubt about this.'

Then comes a series of steps; if one is difficult, then follow the next or the one succeeding:

अथ चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्नोषि मयि स्थिरम्।
अभ्यासयोगेन ततो मामिच्छाप्तुं धनञ्जय॥९॥

Atha cittam samādhātum na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram;
Abhyāsa yogena tato mām icchāptum dhanañjaya — 12. 9

'If you are unable to fix your mind steadily on Me, then, by *abhyāsa-yoga,* seek to reach Me, O Dhanañjaya (Arjuna).'

Atha cittam samādhātum na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram, 'if you find it difficult to fix your mind steadily on Me'*,* then take the next step; practise *abhyāsa yoga* or continual practice. Things become easy when you continually practise them, just like the biceps which develop if you daily take exercise with dumbbells. It must be done daily. Similarly also, *abhyāsa yoga.* The first day, you find it difficult. Second day, still it is difficult. After some days, it is a little better. In this way, there is such a thing as progress in spiritual life. So, do like this: *Abhyāsa yogena tato mām icchāptum dhanañjaya,* 'try to become one with Me, try to achieve oneness with Me, through this *abhyāsa yoga.*'

अभ्यासेऽप्यसमर्थोऽसि मत्कर्मपरमो भव।
मदर्थमपि कर्माणि कुर्वन्सिद्धिमवाप्स्यसि॥१०॥

Abhyāse'pi asamarthosi matkarma parmo bhava;
Madartham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi—12. 10

'If you are unable to practise *abhyāsa* also, be intent on doing actions for My sake. Even by doing actions for My sake, you shall attain perfection.'

If *abhyāsa* also is difficult, then go to the next step: *mat karma paramo bhava,* 'perform all actions dedicated to Me', dedicated to the Divine; *mat karma*, 'actions devoted to Me'. I do work, I do it for the Lord; that is how a *bhakta* does his or her work, because he or she wants to achieve the Lord,

to become one with Him, through spiritual practice. So, this kind of worshipping the Divine through one's work is beautiful.

A Spanish Catholic mystic has said, 'work is meditation through the body'—a wonderful expression. Work is meditation through the body. Meditation through the mind is one type of meditation. But, meditation through the body is work. Whatever work I do, that I offer to the Divine. *Matkarma paramaḥ,* 'devoted to doing the work for Me, the Lord'. We can do every work in that spirit.

The butcher in the *Mahābhārata,* who was simply killing animals, selling the meat, and making his living, became a great *yogī.* And a *brāhmaṇa* ascetic was directed by a *yogī* housewife, after some instruction, to go to this *yogī* (butcher) to learn true *yoga:* 'go and learn higher *dharma* from that person'. But, how can that person be spiritual when he is doing this kind of *vyāpāra* or business, when he is a butcher and selling meat? No *karma* is good or bad; it is our attitude that is very important. And this butcher was dedicated to the Divine and served the Divine through his work. He achieved *yoga* thereby. That is the famous story in the *Mahābhārata*—the story of the *brāhmaṇa* ascetic, of the householder woman who also was highly spiritual by doing her daily work in a spirit of dedication, and of this merchant who was selling meat. That is a very important story in the *Mahābhārata. Madartham api karmāṇi kurvan,* 'even by doing work dedicated to Me, the Divine,' through that path also one can achieve divine perfection.

अथैतदप्यशक्तोऽसि कर्तुं मद्योगमाश्रितः।
सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं ततः कुरु यतात्मवान्॥११॥

Athaitadapi aśakto'si kartum madyogam āśritaḥ;
Sarva karma phala tyāgam tataḥ kuru yatātmavān— 12. 11

'If you are unable to do even this, then taking refuge in Me, abandon the fruit of all actions, being self-controlled.'

Athaitadapi aśakto'si, 'if you find even this is difficult'*; kartum madyogam āśritaḥ,* 'then come to *madyoga,* taking refuge in Me'; *āśritaḥ* means 'depending upon'; then, *sarva karma phala tyāgam tataḥ kuru*

yatātmavān, 'do work renouncing the fruit of all actions, with self-control.' During the performance of work, we cannot think of the Divine; so, at the end of the work, let the fruits be offered to the Divine. I couldn't remember the Lord during the working hours, but towards the end I can offer all the fruits of the work to the Divine. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving, in these few verses, this kind of step by step method to train the mind for *bhakti.*

Sacrifice the fruits of all your actions to Me, and work hard. *Yatātmavān* means 'self-controlled', self-disciplined. Then also you can achieve perfection.

Next, we have verse 12: summing up the previous verses, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद्ध्यानं विशिष्यते।
ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम्॥१२॥

Śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāt jñānāt dhyānam viśiṣyate;
Dhyānāt karma phala tyāgaḥ tyāgāt śāntiranantaram—12. 12

'Better indeed is knowledge than (blind) *abhyāsa;* meditation (with knowledge) is more esteemed than (mere) knowledge; better than meditation, is the renunciation of the fruit of actions; peace immediately follows renunciation.'

The importance of various practices, one by one, is explained here: *śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāt,* '*jñāna* is better than *abhyāsa*'. *Śreyaḥ* means 'excellent'. Mere practice without knowledge has no meaning; so, knowledge is superior to practice. *Jñānāt dhyānam viśiṣyate,* 'better than *jñāna* or knowledge is *dhyāna* or meditation.' And then, *dhyānāt karma phala tyāgaḥ,* 'through *dhyāna,* we achieve *karma phala tyāga*'; 'we renounce the fruits of all actions' at the feet of the Lord. That renunciation of the fruits of actions is what the practice of *dhyāna* brings us to. *Tyāgāt śāntiḥ anantaram,* 'and when that *tyāga* or renunciation comes, the mind becomes *śānta* or peaceful, serene'. So, the successive steps have been mentioned here: *abhyāsa, jñāna, dhyāna,* and *karma phala tyāga;* that *karmaphalatyāga* must come. That is the highest we have to achieve. All this belongs to the Lord; I am only an instrument of the Lord. That attitude

must come through *dhyāna* as well as *jñāna.* If *jñāna* and *dhyāna* do not bring this attitude in me, they become meaningless, fruitless, as it were. So, finally comes *śāntiḥ anantaram.* When all the results of actions are surrendered to the Divine, then *śāntiḥ* or peace comes.

Verse 13 onwards, we get a description of a true *bhakta* or devotee. Who is My true devotee? Such beautiful descriptions we get in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* also:

Mayyarpitātmanaḥ pumsām, mayi sannyasya cetasaḥ;
Na paśyāmi param yogam akartuḥ samadarśanāt —

'The one who is dedicated to Me, he or she is actually doing the work and offering the fruits of all the works to Me. Such a one does not do any work at all, for he or she feels a relaxation because of that attitude of dedication. And so, such a person is dear to Me. He or she is a *sama-darśi,* one with equality of vision.'

Various verses like this are there in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam;* similar verses are there in the *Gītā* also. Normally, we do not consider what is happening to the mind when we work. Is it becoming better, purer, richer? We usually do not ask that question. We just work and wait for external results. Yes, I have dug twenty pits today. I have done good work. Or, I have gone through so many papers and given my opinion on it. My work is over. All that is work *outside*. What is happening to the *mind*? Usually, we do not ask that question. That is why there is so much trouble for humanity. *Is my mind getting better and better? Is it getting purer and purer? Is it getting closer to the Self that is behind?* That means, *is it achieving spiritual progress*? If people ask these questions, it will be a very important thing for humanity. Already, here and there, some newly started magazines are discussing the methods to bring consciousness (mind) into the picture. Consciousness is left behind. Consciousness works, changes the world outside. What happens to consciousness itself? We do not ask this question; that is the misfortune of the world today. Science deals with the objects, but the scientist has a consciousness. What has happened to it? He or she does not care and will say: that is not in my purview! I am concerned with objects. So, only now, in the twentieth century, a little awareness of the importance of consciousness has come; there is a desire to handle

consciousness: can we develop it?, can we expand it?, can we make it pure? These questions are slowly being raised. Ethical and spiritual questions are slowly coming to the forefront. When physical science has come to the end of its tether—it cannot do anything further—it can only give you more gadgets, more machines, and such other things. It can give nothing higher. So, a reaction has come. This subject has come to prominence. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here, when we practise devotion in the midst of work, our mind will be growing. That must be properly studied and directed to the right channel. That is an important responsibility of men and women. If one neglects the mind, he or she will do plenty of work, make plenty of money, but that peace of mind, that spiritual growth, that inner strength will never come to such a one.

In these last few verses of the twelfth chapter of the *Gītā*, we get beautiful ideas. The whole chapter indeed is very beautiful—the smallest with just twenty verses. Many people memorize this chapter. It is fine to recite it. When you are alone, think about it. That is the importance of this twelfth chapter.

When we read these verses, we ask our own mind, 'how am I fitting this description?' The Lord says, those who live like this, holding on to such-and-such virtues, are very dear to Me. *I also want to be dear to the Lord.* How shall I do so? Step by step, let me practise these virtues. Then, finally, that highest dedication to the Divine will come.

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च।
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी॥१३॥

Adveṣṭā sarva bhūtānām maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca;
Nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ sama duḥkha sukhaḥ kṣamī— 12. 13

'He or she who hates no creature, and is friendly and compassionate towards all, who is free from the feelings of "I and mine", even-minded in pain and pleasure, forbearing',

The beginning itself is beautiful. *Adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām,* 'no enmity to any beings'. My devotee will bear no enmity to any beings. That is the teaching. *Maitraḥ,* 'he or she is the friend of all'. Not only no enmity, but

also friendly. *Karuṇa eva ca,* ‘compassionate as well’. *Nirmamo*, ‘free from the idea of: it is mine, it is mine’. That attitude of, ‘it is mine’, is not there. *Nirahaṅkāraḥ,* ‘free from ego’. The ego is not there; it has become a ‘gentle ego’, the ‘ripe ego’, the ‘devotee’s ego’, the ‘servant ego’. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, *dās āmi,* ‘servant I’, *bhakta āmi,* ‘devotee I’. That is a transformation that ego gets. That raw ego remains no more. *Sama duḥkha sukhaḥ kṣamī,* ‘even-minded in pain and pleasure, and forbearing.’ Whenever happiness and misery comes, the mind is thrown into waves in ordinary people. But this devotee will try to keep the mind balanced in the midst of this unbalancing situation. Along with it, he or she will be *kṣamī,* ‘forbearing’; he or she will have tremendous forbearance. Over little things, he or she is not going to get excited, become angry with people, punish them, etc. We are now practising some inner virtues. So, some of our external actions will find a big change. If I am entirely worldly, I will have occasion to hate people, I will have situations in which to fight with people. I will have to do so many things. However, now I am in the world, but *not of the world*; I am also going towards the Divine. And so, a few of these beautiful virtues begin to manifest.

The capacity to forbear is a tremendous capacity. Someone did something bad to me. I keep it imprinted deeply in the mind. Even after twenty years, I do not forget it. That is the usual type. But, when spiritual life begins, I soften it saying, ‘It does not matter. My mind is meant for something higher—not for cultivating all these resentments against the world’. So, we can see this kind of quality in any one who practises spirituality. I read an English sentence in a journal long ago. It says, ‘blessed is the heart that does not collect resentments.’ I go on collecting resentments in the heart, and after twenty years, the heart is full of resentments. What is the nature of that heart? As I said earlier, our body-mind complex has not become a ‘refinery of experience’. When it becomes a refinery, these resentments will never remain the same. We change them; we transform them. We have that capacity. Only, people have forgotten it and taken to only a one-way track: ‘out!, out!’, ‘that man has done me harm; I must finish him; I must punish him’—that kind of attitude. In fact, that is what makes for tragedy in human life. Even the *Mahābhārata* is full of occasions for such tragedy. Resentments went on building up one after

the other until the situation exploded in a total war—a big event in human history. So, this kind of thing should not be. Vyāsa wrote the *Mahābhārata* not to praise war, but to show the evil of hatred, violence, and other evil attitudes. Towards the end of the mighty epic, he gave a summary of the *Mahābhārata* to his son Śuka. There again, he stressed this point. Never should lust, greed, and all such things be cultivated; the mind must be arrested whenever it takes these things within. Slowly, make the mind cleaner and cleaner. That is our inward education. Outwardly, we are busy with everybody.

Adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca;
Nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣamī—

kṣamā vīrasya bhūṣaṇam, 'forbearance is the ornament of the heroic person', is the Sanskrit saying. Don't think that *kṣamā* or forbearance is the virtue of weaklings. Because I am weak, I practise forbearance—that is not forbearance at all. Real *kṣamā* is a virtue, and comes only when you have tremendous strength. If you are weak, you cannot then say, 'I forgive you', because, you cannot forgive that person who is stronger than you. If you are strong, then forgiveness is a great necessity. So, always practise *kṣamā*, if you are strong enough to resist. That is a character trait; it is very beautiful to live in human society with such people. And we want to increase the number of such people. That is how a healthy society evolves. If people try to practise such noble virtues, their number increases, and slowly the nature of forces in society becomes better and better. More good forces come, and, less of evil forces exist. It is from the human mind itself that both good and evil come. So, a little attention to how the mind is behaving, in the context of work, is absolutely essential for all people today. Otherwise, collective life will become difficult, group life will become difficult; life between husband and wife will become difficult, because both, or either of them, has not looked into the mind at all; they have been only looking outside all the time. What has happened to my mind? Has it become mad? Can we turn it in the right direction? These thoughts never trouble such people. That is why there is so much of unnecessary unhappiness and suffering in the world. We can avoid it by taking a little care to shape the mind along with shaping the world outside at the time of doing work.

सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः॥१४॥

Santuṣṭaḥ satatam yogī yatātmā dṛḍhaniścayaḥ;
Mayyarpita mano budhiḥ yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ—12. 14

'Ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled, and possessed of firm conviction, with mind and intellect fixed on Me—one who is thus devoted to Me, is dear to Me.'

One of the important characteristics of spiritual life, as developed in India, is cheerfulness. Spiritual life is a life of cheer, of happiness, not of piteousness or sorrow. Generally people understand, even today, that spiritual people are full of sorrow. They have misunderstood the whole situation. So, when our *brahmacharins* go for *bhikṣā* or alms to various houses, people from the houses ask, 'What has happened to you? What suffering has brought you to this state?' Like that they will ask several questions. That is natural. Like the lady, by name Kiliani, who died just two years ago. I was with her in Paris, as well as in a village near Munich. She was the lady-in-charge of the four daughters of Onassis, that famous shipping magnate of Greece. Those four girls grew up. By the time they were 20 or 23, they were all married. Kiliani retired after twenty years of service with the Onassis family. She had never thought of God or religion. She came to Paris. What was she to do in Paris? One Saturday, she saw in the papers that there was a Ramakrishna-Vedanta centre in Gretz and that there was going to be a talk there. She decided, 'let me go there.' All along she had never thought about spiritual things. She went there and saw the beautiful *āśrama.* So many people were there. There she purchased the famous book on spiritual life, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.* She started reading the book. It was entirely new to her, but deeply inspiring. She had also read my book, *The Message of the Upanishads,* by the time I went there. Then she told me her story. At her request for a Sanskrit name, I gave her the name, Kalyāṇi, 'the auspicious one'. And the most important part of her story was, she was so full of joy; she told me, why did I waste my seventy years without knowing this truth! This is something wonderful. But then she got a phone call from Mrs. Onassis from London, 'Ms. Kiliani,

what is the matter with you? Are you okay?' 'Yes, I am perfectly okay, madam.' 'No, no, you are in an *āśrama.* How can you be okay? Unless you are in trouble, you cannot be there.' She kept telling me, 'How can I make them understand! What a joy I am having! All these seventy years has been a waste, I find. If I had heard these beautiful ideas earlier, how nice it would have been!' That is the story of Kiliani; hundreds of people have the same story—people not knowing that their religion can be a religion of joy.

Sri Ramakrishna showed us a religion of joy. Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself was a man of infinite joy. Jesus Christ was a man of joy in real life, but, in theology, he was made a man of sorrow. In life, he was full of joy. You can study that in the *New Testament*. So, this is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's advice here: *Santuṣṭaḥ satatam yogī,* '*yogī* who is always happy and contented', because he or she is going to come in touch with a profound dimension of Truth. How can one be sorrowful then? *Yatātmā,* 'ever struggling to keep the mind in the right position'. *Dṛḍhaniścayaḥ,* 'with a determined mind'. I have taken to this path, and I will continue to see the end of it, to get the joy of it. *Mayyarpita manobudhiḥ,* 'whose mind and intellect are fixed in Me'; *yo madbhaktaḥ,* 'such a devotee of Mine'; *sa me priyaḥ,* 'is very dear to Me.' If a devotee is like this, he or she is very dear to Me. Then comes a very great ideal which you find mostly in Indian literature: the concept of strength combined with fearlessness and compassion. Usually we see that if one has strength, he or she can be a danger to everybody else; but this strength is of a different type. It brings cheer and security to all people. That is a kind of strength which comes from its spiritual quality. That famous *śloka* is the next one:

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः।
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः॥१५॥

Yasmānnodvijate loko lokānnodvijate ca yaḥ;
Harṣāmarṣa bhayodvegaiḥ mukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ— 12. 15

'One by whom the world is not agitated, and who also cannot be agitated by the world, who is freed from excessive joy, intolerance, fear and anxiety—such a one is dear to Me.'

Yasmāt na udvijate lokaḥ; lokaḥ means ‘the world’; *na udvijate,* ‘doesn’t get agitated’; *yasmāt,* ‘from whom’; ‘that person from whom the world is not agitated’, because he or she is so simple, peaceful and calm. How can such a person agitate anybody? That is the first quality in this verse. The second quality is still greater: *lokān na udvijate ca yaḥ,* ‘whom the world also cannot agitate’. He or she is so strong, so fearless, that the world cannot agitate him or her. And he or she is so gentle, he or she does not agitate the world either. You have there a combination of gentleness and strength. That is the rarest thing in the world. That is what typifies a true devotee.

Gandhiji had such a quality; nobody need be frightened by him and nobody could frighten him also. When you go deeper into spiritual life, these qualities begin to manifest. Absolute fearlessness and yet others need not be afraid. No fear from me. Just like the images in Indian temples with the hand of the deity in the position of *abhaya,* fearlessness; it is called *abhaya-mudra.* Be fearless, be fearless; I am a source of fearlessness to you. Two *mudras* are most common in Indian divine images: *vara* or welcome, and *abhaya* or fearlessness. In the introduction to the first volume of this book, I have referred to another *mudra* or hand pose called *Jnāna mudra*. We have converted these concepts into our iconography, and most of the images have these *mudras.*

Why does not the devotee frighten the world? Because he or she feels oneness with the world. His or her heart is full of love only. There is nothing else in the devotee. Why cannot the world frighten the devotee? Because of his or her being strong as strength itself. He or she is in touch with the Divine within. How can anything frighten such a person? So, the more you advance towards God, the more these two qualities will begin to manifest in you. One may not have it fully in the beginning. But even a little bit of it is wonderful. Why should I be a cause of fear to anybody? We are living in a civilized society. We must be able to shake hands and talk to each other as two friends. In this way, spiritual life increases that ability to overcome fear and to destroy fear in others. That is the type of *bhakti* Śrī Kṛṣṇa is presenting here. Similarly, he or she is free from *harṣa, amarṣa, bhaya,* and *udvega. Harṣa* is, ‘excessive hilarity’; *amarṣa* is, ‘intolerance’; then, *bhaya*, ‘fear’; and *udvega,* ‘mental agitation’; *muktaḥ,* ‘free’ from all

these. He or she is beyond all these. *Yaḥ,* ‘whoever it be’; *sa ca me priyaḥ,* ‘he or she is dear to Me’. What a beautiful description of a devotee of God!

अनपेक्षः शुचिर्दक्ष उदासीनो गतव्यथः।
सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः॥१६॥

Anapekṣaḥ śucirdakṣa udāsīno gatavyathaḥ;
Sarvārambha parityāgī yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ—12. 16

‘One who is free from dependence, who is pure, prompt, unconcerned, untroubled, renouncing every undertaking—one who is thus devoted to Me, is dear to Me.’

Then comes another set of wonderful qualities. *Anapekṣaḥ,* ‘never depending on anything outside’; *apekṣā,* means ‘dependence’; *śuciḥ,* ‘pure’; *dakṣaḥ* means ‘tremendous quality of efficiency’. When a man or woman is capable of doing something, we say he or she is a *dakṣa*. A devotee will not be a goody-goody fellow; he or she will be efficient and tremendously hard-working. And yet, *udāsinaḥ,* he or she is ‘absolutely unattached’, unconcerned as it were. Big work is going on, but he or she is unconcerned. Today, India’s management philosophy is developing slowly; various people are writing books. There this value will have a tremendous place. You are ready to do any work, and yet you do not carry a heavy burden at all. You are working hard, yet you are absolutely ‘unconcerned’. *Udāsīnaḥ* means ‘indifferent to what is going on’. What a difficult combination! Chinese thought, and Indian thought, both have developed these two great ideas: intense work and yet you are not doing work at all—calm and quiet, *udāsīnaḥ. Gatavyathaḥ,* ‘free from all *vyatha* or pain, suffering, etc.’

Sarvārambha parityāgī, without that egoistic planning of this and that, ‘having renounced that feverish passion within’. *Árambha* means ‘new project’; *parityāgi*, ‘renouncer’. What comes to be done, he or she will do, but the idea ‘I am starting a new thing’, will not be there. Heavy work will be there. But the tension for that work will not be there. *Yo madbhaktaḥ,* ‘who is such a devotee of Mine’; *sa me priyaḥ,* ‘he or she is very dear to Me.’

यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न कांक्षति।
शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान् यः स मे प्रियः॥१७॥

Yo na hṛṣyati na dveṣṭi na śocati na kāmkṣati;
Śubhāśubha parityāgī bhaktimān yaḥ sa me priyaḥ—12. 17

'One who neither rejoices, nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, renouncing good and evil, full of devotion, such a one is dear to Me.'

Yo na hṛṣyati, 'he or she who does not become elated'; *na dveṣṭi,* 'doesn't get angry' for something going wrong; *na śocati,* 'he or she doesn't feel sorrow'; *na kāmkṣati,* 'doesn't run after various objects of desire'*; śubhāśubha parityāgī,* 'beyond all these concepts of *śubha* and *aśubha*'; he or she is not concerned with what is pure and what is impure, what is auspicious and what is inauspicious. To those who have devotion to God, these things become secondary. These characteristics come automatically, without any effort. *Bhaktimān yaḥ sa me priyaḥ,* 'such a devotee is really dear to Me.' Then comes,

समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः॥१८॥

Samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca tathā mānāpamānayoḥ;
Śītoṣṇa sukhaduḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅgavivarjitaḥ— 12. 18

'One who is the same to friend and foe, and also in honour and dishonour, who is the same in heat and cold, and in pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment,'

Samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca, 'the devotee has a feeling of equality whether dealing with a friend or an enemy'. These distinctions have vanished. *Śatru* and *mitra* are the same to him or her. *Tathā mānāpamānayoḥ,* 'similarly, even-minded in honour and dishonour'. Somebody has honoured the devotee or somebody has dishonoured him or her; it is just the same. My mind is not going to be worried about this matter. *Śītoṣṇa sukhaduḥkheṣu samaḥ,* 'even-minded in *śīta* or cold*, uṣṇa* or heat*, sukha* or happiness*, duḥkha* or sorrow'. In all these varying stages, the devotee is always the

same. The mind does not vacillate all the time. *Saṅgavivarjitaḥ,* 'free from all attachment.'

तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी सन्तुष्टो येन केनचित्।
अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः॥१९॥

Tulyanindā stutirmaunī santuṣṭo yena kenacit;
Aniketaḥ sthiramatiḥ bhaktimān me priyo naraḥ— 12. 19

'To whom censure and praise are equal, who is silent, content with anything, homeless, steady-minded, full of devotion, such a person is dear to Me.'

Tulyanindā stutiḥ, 'in *nindā* or censure and in *stutiḥ* or praise, the mind is even'. Somebody is condemning the devotee or somebody is praising him or her, but the mind is not at all disturbed by one or the other. *Maunī* means, 'deeply thoughtful' person; most of the mind is much interior, and a little mind is outside to do all the work. A *mauni* is 'a thinking person'; naturally, he or she speaks less. Therefore, such a person is also silent. So, Śaṅkarācārya calls *muni* as one who is *mananaśīlaḥ,* 'ever engaged in thinking', a person of that kind, a thoughtful person; that is a beautiful quality for any human being, because a human being alone can be thoughtful. Animals are thoughtless; they act, and that is all. Men and women can think. So, here is a person who is silent and thoughtful. *Santuṣṭo yena kenacit,* 'satisfied and pleased with whatever comes'; *aniketaḥ sthiramatiḥ; aniketaḥ* means 'one who has no home'. *Niketaḥ* means home. A *sannyasin* is called *aniketaḥ.* But, here it means, though living in a home, you don't feel that you possess it. That detachment is there. What a beautiful idea! When I was in communist Czechoslovakia in 1961, I discussed with a communist there. There nobody owns any property. You live in the house as long as you want, change the house if you like to, but you don't own any property. I said, it is a beautiful idea. One can practise non-attachment very easily if this situation is there, provided other freedoms are also there. If all the freedoms are taken away, then you become like cattle put in a shed! That won't do. You want full freedom, and yet you don't own any property. In a socialistic system that anxiety caused by ownership is not there. That high blood pressure due to worrying about

this or that is not there in a socialistic system in which you don't own anything. You enjoy everything around you, but you don't own anything. Very beautiful, I said. And I saw that situation in Czechoslovakia in 1961. But here it is voluntary. He or she has developed that attitude. I live in the body, but I am not attached to the body. I live in the house, but I am not attached to the house. It is just a place to stay and work; that is all. In this way, we develop the quality of *aniketaḥ* or homelessness. *Sthiramatiḥ,* 'one whose mind is steady'. *Bhaktimān me priyo naraḥ,* 'such a devotee is very dear to Me.'

Finally, in verse 20, He is concluding the whole teaching of this chapter:

ये तु धर्म्यामृतमिदं यथोक्तं पर्युपासते।
श्रद्दधाना मत्परमा भक्तास्तेऽतीव मे प्रिया:॥२०॥

Ye tu dharmyāmṛtam idam yathoktam paryupāsate;
Śraddadhānā matparamā bhaktāste atīva me priyāḥ—12. 20

'And they who follow this Immortal *Dharma* (socially stabilizing and Atman-revealing), as described above, endued with *śraddhā* and regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, and devoted—they are exceedingly dear to Me.'

Bhaktāste atīva me priyāḥ, 'such a devotee is very dear to Me'. *Atīva* means 'exceedingly'. What kind of devotee? Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *Ye tu dharmyāmṛtam idam yathoktam paryupāsate,* 'a devotee who fully practises this teaching which is both *dharmya* and *amṛta*'. *Upāsana* means, half-an-hour worship in the morning and evening, and then it is forgotten. But, this is *paryupāsana; pari* means *samantāt*—twenty-four hours you are doing *upāsana* of the Divine. Because the whole work that you do is also Divine, and not merely ringing a bell or doing a ritual. So, *paryupāsana* can be done from this point of view. You cannot go on doing rituals twenty-four hours a day. It is impossible. But, this way, spiritual practice can be done twenty-four hours a day. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, that devotee who follows these teachings twenty-fours a day, i.e., *paryupāsate; śraddadhānā,* 'with great *śraddhā* or conviction'; *mat paramā,* 'keeping Me as the final goal'; *bhaktāste atīva me priyāḥ,* 'such a devotee is exceedingly dear to Me.'

That is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's promise. He has said, 'he or she who practises this teaching of Mine', but He has qualified this statement; it is a very important qualification. In no translation will you find the meaning of those two words given as intended by the Lord here. What are those words? *Dharmyam* and *amṛtam*—this teaching of Mine which is both *dharmyam* and *amṛtam.* Two words are there. People generally translate them as the 'nectar of teaching'. But these are two great values which you find in the teachings of an *avatāra* or incarnation of God. You may not find it fully in the teachings of a saint. There may be one aspect of it. The other aspect may not be there. What are the two aspects? One is, work for the stability of the society. Society is to be stable, progressive, in which people are happy. That is called *dharmyam*. That aspect of My teaching which is conducive to social stability, happiness and welfare of all people, is called *dharmyam.* And the other is *amṛtam,* 'it takes you towards the realization of the immortal Atman within you.' That is *amṛtam.* My teaching has both these qualities; it can make for a better society; it can make for highly evolved spiritual beings as well. That is the speciality of My teaching. In the ninth chapter, verse 2, Śrī Kṛṣṇa had used the expression: *dharmyam;* if you follow this teaching, you will contribute to the building of a healthy and stable society. Take, for example, the mystical theologies we have had these thousand years in India. We have got some spiritual result from them; some devotion has come; some saints were produced. But, it did not sustain the society. It weakened it. All sorts of weakening came. Foreign invasions came, continuously, century after century. That *dharmyam* aspect was not there in the country. If the *dharmyam* aspect were there, then social stability would have been the primary concern. Then everybody would have achieved his or her life's purpose. Otherwise, in its absence, what happened was, you earned money, you produced goods; but foreigners came and took them away. This happened again and again, century after century. That is called 'missing of the *dharmyam* aspect' in our outlook in India. We studied the *Gītā,* but we never understood this particular idea. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa mentions it here. My devotee will be very practical, will work hard, will know how to work together with others in team spirit. And to make people in society happy, he or she will go wherever there is suffering and see that the suffering is removed. That is My devotee's work—compassion, the spirit of *seva*. As Sri Ramakrishna said, every *jīva* is Śiva; service of the

jīva is the worship of Śiva. This is a very important theme. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself has said similar things in many places in the *Mahābhārata* as well as in the *Gītā.* One *śloka* taken from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is wonderful. In the existing editions I did not see this verse, but Dr. S. Radhakrishnan quoted it and told me it is from *Viṣṇu Purāṇa.* I could not locate it anywhere. But, the *śloka* is beautiful:

Svadharma karma vimukhāḥ kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇeti vādinaḥ;
Te harer dveṣiṇo mūḍhāḥ dharmārtham janma yaddhyareḥ—

'Those devotees who will not follow the *dharma* and *karma* taught by the Lord—which He Himself practises when He comes as an Incarnation—and those devotees who never care for this *dharma,* nor discharge social responsibilities, but only repeat Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, such devotees are the enemies of Hari, the Lord.' Why?, seeing such 'devotees', people run away from Hari. If this is religion, we do not want that! Not only so, they are *mūḍhāḥ,* 'fools'; they can't understand true religion. Why?, *dharmārtham janma yaddhyareḥ,* because 'Hari Himself who lives in His happy abode, occasionally takes up this human incarnation for establishing *dharma* for the good of humankind'; He sets an example, but we won't follow that example. We say, 'O God, your eyes are good, your nose is good', and go on praising God, like courtiers praising kings. Religion became like this and therefore we lost freedom. That *dharmyam* element vanished from the religious teaching. A little of the *amṛtam* element was there. Some little peace of mind had come to us through religion. But nothing great. And so, in this modern period, you find in the teachings of Swami Vivekananda emphasis on this *dharmyam* aspect also, on the need for developing a tremendous capacity for hard work for transforming the human situation, along with deep spiritual development. Actually, when Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Sangha, the motto he gave in Sanskrit contains a combination of these two values: *ātmano mokṣārtham jagad hitāya ca,* 'For one's own spiritual liberation and for the good of the world'. That must be the purpose of our life. That must be our plan of action. That must be the motto of the whole nation today. *Átmano mokṣārtham jagad hitāya ca.* I will do hard work by which the nation will benefit. But I will also benefit spiritually. I will grow spiritually. These two must go together. They are not separate. That is why the word *ca,* 'and', comes there as the last word.

Jagat hita and *ātmano mokṣaḥ* must go together. That is the special significance of this last verse of the twelfth chapter.

If I do my work with devotion, efficiency, in a team spirit, naturally, poverty, backwardness, and illiteracy will be destroyed from the nation. And along with it I grow closer and closer to the Divine. Spiritual development takes place. When I take these two together into account, then it becomes a complete philosophy of life: worldly welfare as well as spiritual development. Both become possible. And that is also the final testament of the *Gītā* given in its last *śloka,* which we shall study when we take up chapter 18. Worldly welfare, moral elevation, spiritual growth, all will be possible in the world through a unifying philosophy, not through a one-sided philosophy. Till now, we had only the one-sided philosophy. For twenty minutes we were religious. For the rest of the time, we were all sorts of people doing everything—good, bad, and being indifferent, etc. That is what we understood by so called religion. Even the *Gītā* we understood like that. That will change. That is where comes the importance of studying this book carefully. It was given by a great teacher. It must be strengthening, purifying. Don't touch anything that is weakening, said Swami Vivekananda, for there is no truth in it. Truth is strengthening, truth is purity, truth is all knowledge. So, only truth should you touch. Reject everything else. Swamiji has said so. So, it is that kind of truth that the *Gītā* presents. We have to assimilate it and then get that blessing from the Lord: 'you are My true devotee.' That kind of God's certificate must come to each one of us. One's own certificate, 'I am God's devotee', won't do. What is the use until God says, 'you are My true devotee'. That cannot come until we fulfil both these requirements of *dharmyam* and *amṛtam*.

The discussion of this important subject of *dharmyam* and *amṛtam* will become clearer when dealt with in the context of modern Western biological thought on evolution at the human stage.

The human body is composed of genes; and genes are essentially selfish. The British biologist Richard Dawkins has written a book bearing this very title, *The Selfish Gene.* Says he (p. 3):

'A human society based simply on the gene's law of universal ruthless selfishness would be a very nasty society in which to live.… Be warned

that, if you wish, as I do, to build a society in which individuals cooperate generously and unselfishly towards a common good, you can expect little help from biological nature.'

Here we see the importance of the Vedantic teaching that the *dehātma-buddhi,* 'the awareness that we are only the physical body', should go before any ethical, moral, and humanistic values can manifest in any human being. Sir Julian Huxley himself, in his very important book, *Evolution: A New Synthesis,* similarly says: 'Unless the mammal in us die, the man in us cannot survive'. The human body, biology says, belongs to the mammalian species.

Physical science does not know the source of these values; it is not certainly the external physical nature, nor its product, the physical body of the human being, nor the ego in it, as long as it is subordinate to the genetic system. And, value awareness is not found also in the bodies of any non-human species, but it is found manifested only in the human beings. Vedanta alone has discovered its depth dimension as the eternal, immortal Atman.

The ego centred in the human genetic system gives human beings a sense of individuality, i.e., *vyaktitva,* with the capacity for imagination based on the ego; that alone enables the human being to dominate all animals. Says neurologist Gray Walter in his book, *The Living Brain,* (p. 2): 'The brain of lion, tiger, rhinoceros, and other powerful animals, alas, lacks the mechanism of imagination, or we should not be here to discuss the matter.'

The science of values has to deal with this ego in human beings, how to make it free from the genetic system and make it expanded into a *pākā āmi* or 'ripe ego', *vikasita vyaktitva,* i.e., a personality which then will have the capacity to enter into happy inter-human relations and manifest values. This concept of *kācā āmi* (unripe ego) developing into *pākā āmi* (ripe ego) is the contribution of Sri Ramakrishna to the science of values in the modern age. Human march from sense-bound worldliness to spirituality begins with this development; this is the meaning of the word *dharmyam* mentioned by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the last verse. Its further march to complete spiritual freedom of the human being by realizing one's ever-present immortal Divine Atman

constitutes what is meant by the second word, *amṛtam.* That is the goal of human evolution. These two constitute the *abhyudaya* by *pravṛtti*, and *niḥśreyasa* by *nivṛtti,* as expressed in my ‘Introduction’ to the first volume.

इति भक्तियोगो नाम द्वादशोऽध्यायः ।

Iti bhakti-yogo nāma dvādaśo’dhyāyaḥ —

‘Thus ends the twelfth chapter, designated *The Way of Devotion.*’

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 13

Kṣetra-Kṣetrajña-Vibhága-Yoga
The Discrimination of the Kṣetra and the Kṣetrajña

Today, we enter the very important thirteenth chapter of the *Gītā.* All through this great book, you will note that the amount of philosophy and high scientific thought that has been mixed with the teaching of spiritual life, is unique. It is food for heart *and* brain. And, in this chapter, you have a good deal of that scientific element. This kind of discussion on things worth thinking about, expositions of spiritual life, are very rare in all other religions. Take any religion and study its text books; there will not be even a fraction of the philosophy and high scientific thought that you get in the *Gītā.* This chapter and the earlier seventh chapter are especially significant from that point of view.

Usually, the opening verse of this chapter is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's utterance. But in some editions, there is a question by Arjuna taken as the first verse. Śaṅkarācārya and other commentators, —and Lokamānya Tilak too— consider this one verse through the mouth of Arjuna as an interpolation. If Śaṅkarācārya thinks that it was not originally there, then it is difficult for us to accept that it is genuine. But in the *Gītā* edition of Swami Swarupananda (published by Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas), that first verse is also given. It doesn't add anything new; it is just a question put through the mouth of Arjuna, so that Śrī Kṛṣṇa's words become answers.

Though, in this book, Arjuna's question has been given, in numbering, it has not been included. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's answer is taken as the first *śloka*, because Śaṅkarācārya has not taken that verse of Arjuna as originally belonging to the *Gītā;* later on, some people thrust it into the chapter. So, Swami Swarupananda must have included it.

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca—

'Arjuna said:'

प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव क्षेत्रं क्षेत्रज्ञमेव च ।
एतद्वेदितुं इच्छामि ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं च केशव॥०॥

Prakṛtim puruṣam caiva kṣetram kṣetrajñameva ca;
Etadveditum icchāmi jñānam jñeyam ca keśava — 13. 0

'*Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*, also the *kṣetra* and the knower of the *kṣetra,* knowledge and that which ought to be known—these, O Keśava, I desire to learn.'

Arjuna says to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, 'I want to know, O Kṛṣṇa, about these truths'. What are they? *Prakṛti* or Primordial nature, and *Puruṣa* or Primordial Intelligence. These two are behind the universe. I want to know about *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa.* We are all *Puruṣas,* intelligent beings. The whole world is *Prakṛti,* non-intelligent matter. So, one is *Prakṛti*, and the other is *Puruṣa. Kṣetram kṣetrajñameva ca,* I want to know also about the distinction between '*kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña.*' *Kṣetram* means 'a field'. In that field you sow and you reap. So, the body as well as the physical world outside, are called the *kṣetra;* and the one who knows the body, the Principle of Intelligence within, that is *kṣetrajña. Jña* means 'knower' of the *kṣetra. Kṣetra* doesn't know itself. Something knows the *kṣetra;* that is called *kṣetrajña. Etat veditum icchāmi,* 'I desire to know these' truths; *jñānam jñeyam ca,* 'also the nature of *jñāna* and *jñeya*'. *Jñāna* means 'knowledge'; *jñeya* means 'the object of knowledge'. There are three things: knower or *jñātā*, knowledge or *jñāna,* and the object of knowledge or *jñeya*. This is called *tripuṭi* in Vedanta*;* these 'three' always go together. When I know something, these three things are present: 'I', 'the act of knowing', and that 'something which is known'. Dissolution of this *tripuṭi* through scientific investigation and arrival at the supreme unity of knowledge is Vedanta's great work. There is only Knowledge; there is not a knower, and an object of knowledge except in the relative world. Knowledge alone is the One Truth of things. Consciousness, experience, knowledge—that alone exists. Others are only various forms of that Infinite Knowledge. So, God is called *cit* or Pure Knowledge by Vedanta; the ultimate Truth is *jñāna svarūpa* or *cit svarūpa.* That is God according to Vedanta. So,

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord answers:'

इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते।
एतद्यो वेत्ति तं प्राहुः क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद्विदः॥१॥

Idam śarīram kaunteya kṣetram ityabhidhīyate;
Etadyo vetti tam prāhuḥ kṣetrajña iti tadvidaḥ — 13. 1

'This body, O son of Kuntī, is called *kṣetra,* and the one who knows it is called *kṣetrajña* by those who know them.'

Idam śarīram kaunteya, 'O Arjuna, this body'; *idam* means 'this', pointing it out. *Kṣetram iti abhidhīyate,* 'is known as *kṣetra*'; its name is *kṣetra; etat yo vetti,* 'one who knows this' *kṣetra; tam prāhuḥ kṣetrajña,* 'he is called *kṣetrajña*'; *iti tadvidaḥ,* according to the great philosophers 'who thus know the subject'. Those who know the subject say that, this is the knower of the *kṣetra;* in the word *kṣetrajña, jña* stands for 'knower'. And so, these two are the factors.

In the seventh chapter (verse 4), Śrī Kṛṣṇa had already declared His own Divine Nature as consisting of two aspects: one is the physical aspect, the other is the spiritual aspect. All these—earth, water, fire, air, space, all these nature's elements—belong to the first category. It also includes the ego in men and women. He had said, *apareyam,* 'they are My inferior nature'. Besides this, *prakṛtim me viddhi parām*, 'know My higher nature'*; yayedam dhāryate jagat,* 'by which all this is sustained'. That is My higher nature. Therefore, I am the author of the whole universe through these two natures, so that *nothing outside God* remains in the universe. Everything is His own form: there is an external form by the name *aparā prakṛti,* lower nature and its various evolutions; and there is also *parā prakṛti*, higher nature, or pure Intelligence. This is so in all of us, and that Truth will be conveyed in the next verse.

'One who knows the *kṣetra* is known as the *kṣetrajña*'. Our normal understanding is that every *kṣetra* has a separate *kṣetrajña,* a separate self

knowing it. That is being corrected in the next verse: In all these *kṣetras,* there is only one real *Kṣetrajña,* and 'I am that supreme *Kṣetrajña* in all the *kṣetras*'.

क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत।
क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोर्ज्ञानं यत्तज्ज्ञानं मतं मम॥२॥

Kṣetrajñam cāpi mām viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata;
Kṣetrakṣetrajñayoḥ jñānam yat tat jñānam matam mama—13. 2

'Know Me also, O descendent of Bharata, to be the *Kṣetrajña* in all the *kṣetras.* The knowledge of *kṣetra* and *Kṣetrajña* is considered by Me to be *the* Knowledge.'

'Arjuna, in all these *kṣetras,* know Me to be the one single *Kṣetrajña,* the one single Principle of Intelligence, Consciousness or Knowledge'. Then He sums up the teaching by saying: *kṣetrakṣetrajñayoḥ jñānam yat, tat jñānam matam mama.* 'That is My view,' what?, 'knowledge of *kṣetra* and knowledge of *Kṣetrajña* together constitute the totality of all knowledge'. One alone won't do. Knowing *kṣetrajña* alone won't do; *kṣetra* must also be known. Whatever the physical sciences can tell us about the external world, all that is knowledge of *kṣetra;* we have to take those into our consideration. Then there is the knower, consciousness, the observer—that also we have to take into account. A full picture of reality will include both. Till now Western physical science considered only one aspect of Reality—the objective world observed by the senses and studied by the mind of the scientist. Even if there is an observer, it also is converted to be a form of the *kṣetra*. *Kṣetra* in another form is the *kṣetrajña*, they will say, following the nineteenth century materialistic theory. But that is slowly changing. They are finding it impossible to convert consciousness into a piece of matter. They are finding it impossible to derive consciousness from some material powers or forces. When they come to a mature conclusion, they will recognize the truth that is expounded in this *Gītā.* Here is *kṣetra,* here is *kṣetrajña,* and when you investigate this *kṣetrajña,* it looks as if there are so many *kṣetrajñas*, but really there is only one *Kṣetrajña* and that manifests through all the *kṣetras.* That unitive knowledge will come. This diversity is an appearance; there is only one pure Consciousness as the

knower of all the observed items in the whole universe as well as in all the observers. That fills the universe. That is in you, in me, and in all. In that way, the unity and non-duality of Consciousness has been proclaimed. There is only one pure Self in all beings. That is what Vedanta has established through investigation, discussion, and experience. *Átma ekatva vidyā pratipattaye sarve vedā ārabhyante,* 'all the Upaniṣads have only this object in view: to show that there is only one Atman in all beings.' *Átma ekatva vidyā,* 'the science of the unity of the Self'. There is no duality in Consciousness. That is what I quoted earlier from Schrodinger, our nuclear scientist: 'Consciousness is singular of which the plural is unknown'. So, when one studies the process of knowledge, the object of knowledge, and the knower of knowledge, one will finally reach that one Advaitic *cit svarūpa*—One Infinite Brahman or Infinite Atman, one and non-dual; *ekam eva advitīyam brahma,* 'Brahman is one and never two', as the Upaniṣads express it.

It is there that we are all one. We have different bodies, but we are one Supreme Self. It is like a thread running through all of us, as in a garland. That is the unity of men and women, the unity of all existence. The scope of knowledge is *kṣetra and kṣetrajña;* not one of them alone, but both. That is the meaning of knowledge. No knowledge is complete unless we know *kṣetrajña* and *kṣetra.* Thus, today's knowledge of physical science is incomplete; it knows only the *kṣetra*, and it considers *kṣetrajña* as a transformation of *kṣetra:* just chemistry and physics transformed into the brain and its thinking power, etc. This conclusion cannot stand scrutiny; it is being questioned, as we have seen in the seventh chapter. Therefore, this *kṣetrajña,* the knower, the observer, is a fact. A scientist studies the world. The scientist doesn't want to take himself or herself into consideration: I shall take into consideration only the objective world. He or she then abstracts oneself. That is how sciences begin. That was correct. As a result, towards the end of the 19th century, they discovered many things about the world, and the discoverer became too small—only a product of the external matter. That is all what a scientist is! Scientist as the observer, as the knower, as the Self—that scientist—lost all actuality. That is what is being corrected now. The observer is a tremendous datum, and cannot be reduced to a mere part of the observed data. He or she must therefore understand

who is the observer. Physical science cannot deny that important datum any more.

So, from the knowledge of the *kṣetra,* we are asking this question: who is it that knows all this? The scientist knows the world; who is that scientist? Who is it that knows? There is a *kṣetrajña* there. That is how the *Gītā* puts it. There must be an observer; everything is not mere observed data. If so, what is the nature of the observer? Śrī Kṛṣṇa tell us: it is Knowledge, Consciousness, Intelligence, *cit* or *cetanā;* that is the nature of the observer. In no observed data will you find this principle of knowledge. Śaṅkaracārya argues in many places in the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*: if the eye is intelligent by itself, then eye should know the ear, eye should know the nose, eye should know other sense organs as well. But, it doesn't derive its intelligence from itself. It comes from a deeper source. The eye is only a medium through which Intelligence functions; so also, other sense organs. All the sense organs are inert. They become alive only because of some power within, slowly pushing them into action. That power is the *jīvabhūtām,* 'the principle of intelligence', as the seventh chapter has expressed it; it is *parā prakṛti* or higher nature. And this *cit śakti* is only one in all beings, cut up into bits *apparently*. Śaṅkarācārya will use the word 'apparently' later on. Apparently many, but really one—that language will come again and again. That is real *jñāna* or Knowledge: totality of knowledge of reality, which includes knowledge of *kṣetra* and knowledge of *Kṣetrajña.*

One can enjoy God in a particular spiritual way; but, what about the world around him or her? That is also a part of the divine expression. We cannot negate it. In that way, when you speak of reality as a whole, this objective world also comes into the picture. I see it, I experience it. It is a manifestation of the same non-dual Divine Reality which Vedanta calls Brahman or Atman. If the soul is the manifestation of the divine, the world is also the manifestation of the divine, according to Vedanta. There is only one Reality behind the whole universe, conscious or unconscious—*cit* or *acit.*

तत्क्षेत्रं यच्च यादृक् च यद्विकारि यतश्च यत्।
स च यो यत्प्रभावश्च तत्समासेन मे शृणु॥३॥

Tat kṣetram yacca yādṛkca yad vikāri yataśca yat;
Sa ca yo yatprabhāvaśca tat samāsena me śṛṇu — 13. 3

'What that *kṣetra* is, what its properties are, what its modifications are, what effects arise from what causes, and also who is He and what His powers are, that hear from Me in brief.'

Me śṛṇu, 'listen to Me'*; tat samāsena,* 'that in brief'; what?, 'what is that *kṣetra,* what are its properties, what are its modifications, what effects arise from what causes'. When you take the whole process of evolution from the cosmic stellar level to the organic level and then to the human level, and study the whole phenomena, all that is *kṣetra;* the intelligent source of this observed universe is the *kṣetrajña.*

ऋषिभिर्बहुधा गीतं छन्दोभिर्विविधैः पृथक्।
ब्रह्मसूत्रपदैश्चैव हेतुमद्भिर्विनिश्चितैः॥४॥

Ìṣibhirbahudhā gītam chandobhiḥ vividhaiḥ pṛthak;
Brahmasūtra padaiścaiva hetumadbhiḥ viniścitaiḥ — 13. 4

'(This truth) has been sung by sages in many ways, in various Vedic utterances, and also in passages expounding Brahman, which are full of reasoning, and are convincing.'

This subject has been expounded and sung variously by sages, by different Vedic utterances, and also by the sentences indicative of Brahman. *Ìṣibhirbahudhā gītam,* '*ṛṣis* or sages have sung about it in various ways'; *chandobhiḥ vividhaiḥ pṛthak*, 'so also *chandas*, i.e. Vedic utterances'. The language used in the Vedas is *chandas;* so it means Vedic utterances. *Brahmasūtrapada,* 'sentences which are indicative of and lead to Brahman'; *hetumadbhiḥ viniścitaiḥ,* 'with sound reasoning and in a convincing manner'; *hetumat* means 'rational presentation'; *viniścita* means 'convincingly'. So, this is how the truths of Vedanta have been expounded or sung in various ways.

Now, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving a classification.

महाभूतान्यहङ्कारो बुद्धिरव्यक्तमेव च।
इन्द्रियाणि दशैकं च पञ्च चेन्द्रियगोचराः॥५॥

Mahābhūtāni ahaṅkāro buddhiḥ avyaktameva ca;
Indriyāṇi daśaikam ca pañca ca indriyagocarāḥ — 13. 5

'The great primordial elements, egoism, intellect, as also the Causal Unmanifested Nature (*Mūlā Prakṛti*), the ten senses, and the one (mind), and the five objects of the senses;'

इच्छा द्वेषः सुखं दुःखं सङ्घातश्चेतना धृतिः।
एतत्क्षेत्रं समासेन सविकारमुदाहृतम्॥६॥

Icchā dveṣaḥ sukham duḥkham saṅghātaḥ cetanā dhṛtiḥ;
Etat kṣetram samāsena savikāram udāhṛtam — 13. 6

'Desire, hatred, pleasure, pain, the aggregate, intelligence, fortitude—the *kṣetra* has been thus briefly described with its modifications.'

According to the Sāṅkhya, there are twenty-four categories to deal with in the universe. And the twenty-fifth category is the *Puruṣa,* of the nature of Pure Consciousness. In the twenty-four categories there is no intelligence. They are *acit,* 'non-intelligent'*;* they are *Prakṛti's* evolutions in various forms. *Cosmic evolution is a very ancient teaching in India by the Sāṅkhyas*. In the West, it appeared only in the nineteenth century. Even now it has not taken root. Fundamentalist Christians, and even professors in America, are resisting modern evolutionary theory being taught in schools. If you teach that, you must also teach the *Bible's* story of creation, that God created the world in six or seven days. So, a big fight is going on in America just now, because the fundamentalist theological ideas of the past, collide with the scientific rational ideas of today.

However, that did not happen in India. When we speak of cosmic and organic evolution, it is according to our own philosophic thought. Imagine what a tremendous change it makes. This country is well based on scientific thinking about the universe around, as well as things close by. So, we have always upheld that this universe is a product of an evolutionary process from an undifferentiated state of nature to a differentiated state. And that

differentiated state can go down and further down, up from the starry heavens down to the clump of grass.

So, *mahābhūtāni,* 'the five *mahābhūtas*', which mean, 'very minute nuclear dimensions of matter,' like fire, water, earth, etc. These—the fire, water, earth, etc.—are the physical substances with which we explain them, but what they really constitute in their primordial form is called *mahābhūtas*. Then, *ahaṅkāraḥ,* 'the I-notion'. In the cosmic evolution, you do not see 'I', but when you come to organic evolution, at the human stage, you find this 'I' coming in. *Buddhi,* 'intellect', reason; *avyaktam eva ca,* 'the undifferentiated aspect of nature'. *Vyakta* means 'differentiated', and *avyakta* means 'undifferentiated'. *Indriyāṇi daśaikam ca,* 'the ten sense organs *plus* one, namely, the mind'. Five organs of action: hand, feet, etc., and five organs of perception: eye, ear, nose, etc., which are organs of experience, or perception. These are called the *daśa indriyas,* 'ten organs', five of action and five of perception. *Ekam ca,* 'plus one', i.e., *manas* or mind. *Manas* also is a type of *indriya,* a little more evolved, but it is still treated as an *indriya* only. *Pañca ca indriyagocarāḥ,* 'and the five objects experienced by the five senses': form, sound, taste, touch, and smell. The senses experience their objects and so the world has a fivefold experience. For example, the *eye* sees only *form. Ear* hears only *sound. Tongue* understands only *taste. Skin* knows only *touch.* And the *nose* detects *smell* alone. All these various senses have particular objects in view to experience. They are called the *indriyagocarāḥ. Gocara* means 'what can be perceived by the senses'.

Icchā, 'desire'; *dveṣa,* 'anger'; *sukham-duḥkham,* 'happiness-misery'; *saṅghātaḥ,* 'the combination of various parts', that makes a *saṅghāta*. *Cetanā,* 'intelligence'; *dhṛtiḥ,* 'great courage' or will-power. *Etat kṣetram,* 'all these are *kṣetra*'; *samāsena savikāram udāhṛtam,* 'I have illustrated this *kṣetra* fully along with their modifications'. So, the whole objective universe is *kṣetra,* in which we include our own mind, body, sensory system, everything. The only thing beyond all these is Pure Intelligence, Pure Consciousness, that lies at the centre of the universe. About that Śrī Kṛṣṇa will say a little later.

Now the subject of *jñāna* is taken up. What is *jñāna* or knowledge, specially spiritual knowledge? 'Knowledge' is expounded here through 'the means of knowledge'. How do you get true spiritual knowledge? Certain means are there. Certain moral qualities and virtues are there. These values that *lead* to knowledge are mentioned here in this *śloka,* beginning with *amānitvam* or humility.

अमानित्वमदम्भित्वमहिंसा क्षान्तिरार्जवम्।
आचार्योपासनं शौचं स्थैर्यमात्मविनिग्रहः॥७॥

Amānitvam adambhitvam ahimsā kṣāntirārjavam;
Ácāryopāsanam śaucam sthairyam ātmavinigrahaḥ — 13. 7

'Humility, unpretentiousness, non-injury, forbearance, uprightness, service to the teacher, purity, steadiness, self-control;'

The first word says, *amānitvam,* 'humility'; that *māna* or egoistic attitude should not be there. That humble attitude is needed which alone can give knowledge. Similarly, *adambhitvam,* 'free from pretentiousness'; the opposite is *dambha,* pretentious attitude. Next comes *ahimsā,* 'non-injury', which is very important as a means to higher knowledge. *Kṣāntiḥ* is 'forbearance'; *ārjavam*, 'uprightness'; *ācāryopāsanam*, 'service to the teacher'. The teacher has got knowledge; I want that knowledge, and so I serve the teacher and get knowledge from him or her. So, *ācāryopāsanam* is an essential part of education. In ancient times, knowledge was highly priced. Today, knowledge is priced only for jobs and so we do not respect the giver of knowledge and even the knowledge itself. The teacher also doesn't respect himself or herself as a possessor of knowledge. That is the low condition to which knowledge-seeking, knowledge-transmitting has come to in this modern period. It has become commercialised. There is nothing high, nothing of value in it. *Śaucam* is 'purity', both physical and mental purity; *sthairyam*, 'steadiness'; *ātma vinigrahaḥ,* 'self-control', self-discipline, whereby the energy in my system is kept under my discipline and control. They will not do anything without my sanction—that kind of perfect self-discipline.

इन्द्रियार्थेषु वैराग्यमनहङ्कार एव च।
जन्ममृत्युजराव्याधिदुःखदोषानुदर्शनम्॥८॥

Indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam anahaṅkāra eva ca;
Janma mṛtyu jarā vyādhi duḥkha doṣa anudarśanam—13. 8

'The renunciation of (excessive attachment to) sense-objects, and also absence of egoism, reflection on the evils of birth, death, old age, sickness, and pain;'

Other virtues come in: When we want higher knowledge, we have to detach ourselves from our genetic system and the sensory objects. They draw us down all the time and so higher knowledge cannot come. So, a 'dispassion towards sensory objects' is what is called *indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam.* Similarly, *anahaṅkāra eva ca*, 'free from egoism'. That is a very important virtue to be cultivated to get higher knowledge. When the ego is fat, higher knowledge cannot come. *Janma mṛtyu jarā vyādhi duḥkha doṣa anudarśanam,* 'he or she must constantly see the evil or the source of sorrow which the following are: *janma mṛtyu jarā vyādhi,* "birth, death, old age, and sickness"'. These are all productive of sorrow. You must always have a detached attitude towards them. See evil in them, *doṣa anudarśanam. Anudarśanam* means 'constantly seeing' the truth of these things. They are only temporary; they are there for some years and then they are gone. But within that time, I shall put them to good use to get higher knowledge, to get the knowledge of the *kṣetrajña*. That is what is needed. The body is an instrument only for that purpose.

असक्तिरनभिष्वङ्गः पुत्रदारगृहादिषु।
नित्यं च समचित्तत्वमिष्टानिष्टोपपत्तिषु॥९॥

Asaktiḥ anabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putra dāra gṛhādiṣu;
Nityam ca sama cittatvam iṣṭāniṣṭopapattiṣu — 13. 9

'Non-attachment, non-identification of self with son, wife, home, and the rest, and constant even-mindedness in the occurrence of the desirable and the undesirable;'

Asaktiḥ is ‘a spirit of detachment’*; anabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putra dāra gṛhādiṣu*, ‘non-identification with respect to family, husband, wife, children, house, etc.’*;* the attitude, ‘I live there in the midst of these, but I am not a part of them. I am not a prisoner there.’ *Putra* means ‘children’; *dāra* means ‘husband or wife’; *gṛha* means ‘home’, *ādi* means ‘etc.’. There should not be too much blind attachment. Love can be there; but attachment should not be there. *Nityam ca sama cittatvam*, ‘constantly practise even-mindedness’. The mind has a tendency to go in a choppy way in a choppy ocean. That is its nature. But I can make it calm and quiet. In the second chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa had defined *yoga* as *samatvam* or ‘equanimity’. So, we have to constantly practise this *samacittatvam.* When? *Iṣṭāniṣṭopapattiṣu*, ‘when either desirable things occur or undesirable things occur’, the mind has a tendency to become choppy; that is its nature. But I am here to control it, to change it. *My* nature will be able to control *that* nature. Men and women must take responsibility for that. We have the power to do so. We need not be at the beck and call of every impulse that comes from outside. An impulse comes, and it throws me out of balance. What a poor creature I am! I can regulate it. We need this kind of affirmation, and we need to live and work following that affirmation. This is how we get higher knowledge. If we just say okay to whatever the senses say, no knowledge can come. So, let there be this kind of even-mindedness in the occurrence of *iṣṭa* and *aniṣṭa*, ‘pleasant’ and ‘unpleasant’. Let not the mind be thrown off balance. Begin with a little effort; in the beginning it will be very feeble, but it will grow. We can train our minds.

मयि चानन्ययोगेन भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी।
विविक्तदेशसेवित्वमरतिर्जनसंसदि॥१०॥

Mayi ca ananya yogena bhaktiḥ avyabhicāriṇi;
Vivikta deśa sevitvam aratiḥ janasamsadi — 13. 10

‘Unswerving devotion to Me by the *yoga* of non-separation, inclination to resort to sequestered places, distaste for the (constant) society of men and women;’

Mayi ca bhaktiḥ, ‘tremendous devotion towards Me’; *ananya yogena,* ‘with one-pointed devotion’; *avyabhicāriṇi,* ‘without any mix-up of things’.

Pure devotion to Me must be practised. *Vivikta deśa sevitvam,* 'the habit of trying to be alone', going to places where you are alone, not in a crowd. Normally, we are in a crowd. In society, we are in the crowd. But, a little withdrawal is essential for cultivating higher knowledge. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that one should go out once a while and live alone. 'Alone' is the word used, and in today's thinking, in *The American Handbook of Psychiatry*—a big thick book which I read in Washington as I have mentioned in detail in the Introduction to the first volume—it is written that if creativity is to be cultivated in our children in America, our children must be given the opportunity to be alone—not always in the crowd. No creativity can come in a crowd, but only when you are alone. When you speak very little and are calm, then only can the creative mind find expression. Now, these are found in modern books like *The American Handbook of Psychiatry.* In all spiritual teachings, these are all included as being essential for developing a creative mind in men and women. One should not become stagnant at a particular level.

Bhaktiḥ avyabhicāriṇi, 'undeviating devotion' for Me; *vivikta deśa sevitvam*, 'seeking a quiet place'; *vivkta* means 'alone'; *deśa* means 'place'; *sevitvam,* 'resorting to'. What a beautiful conception—'the desire to be alone'! Even in education, a man like the agnostic Bertrand Russell says, a child must be made to sit alone, live alone for some time and enjoy it; out of that only can creativity come. They certainly need to play and have fun. They also need silence, quietude, and aloneness. Both these must be given to children. This is a very important point. Just a few weeks ago, I got the huge proceedings of a seminar in the Panth Agricultural University, Uttar Pradesh, India, on 'Creativity and Our Education'. Very distinguished writers have contributed articles. I read through most of it, and later on, it was put in our Math Library and Reading Room. So, this kind of thinking—how to make our children creative, and not humdrum—is going on. There is creativity in all. We know how to suppress it! We don't know how to stimulate it. These beautiful ideas are given, and I am particularly happy that, for the first time, a very big effort was made to hold a seminar on this subject of creativity. Our people are generally creative, but modern education has mechanised our minds. That creativity is going away. And so, I found that book very interesting from that point of view. I replied to the

sender, Prof. Malavia, Dean of the Faculty, giving a copy of my book, *Divine Grace,* in which I have quoted the American psychiatrist, the author of *The American Handbook of Psychiatry.* I got it Xeroxed in Washington; it is with me in my library. So, out of that I have quoted in the *Divine Grace* some very important passages on how to develop creativity. What a wonderful quality it is!

Aratiḥ janasamsadi, 'a little unhappiness when you are in the crowd'—'I want to be away', that attitude. Not hatred of men and women, but avoiding too much of rubbing shoulders, as one American has said. Too much of rubbing shoulders will also rub the nerves. So, being a little apart is good for some time. *Aratiḥ* means 'hatred'; *janasamsadi* means 'the collection of people'. Hatred to be long in the midst of too many people, and along with that, a love for aloneness. Both these are combined together. There is no question of hatred of man or woman here. There is a time when I can be with people. There is a time when I can be myself. Even little children sometimes like to be left alone. If the mother and the father constantly handle them, they say, 'No! Go now! I want to be alone now.' It is very good; always encourage it. Let them be alone. 'Be alone.' That is how the mind is trained. New dimensions open up. So, parents must know this; teachers must know this. Then, slowly we can inspire our children with these methods by which creativity can be sustained in them.

अध्यात्मज्ञाननित्यत्वं तत्त्वज्ञानार्थदर्शनम्।
एतज्ज्ञानमिति प्रोक्तमज्ञानं यदतोऽन्यथा॥११॥

Adhyātma jñāna nityatvam tattva jñānārtha darśanam;
Etad jñānamiti proktam ajñānam yadato'nyathā — 13. 11

'Constant application to spiritual knowledge, realizing the purpose of true knowledge; this is declared to be knowledge, and what is opposed to it is ignorance.'

Two more items are mentioned here: *Adhyātma jñāna nityatvam,* 'constant pursuit of spiritual knowledge', knowledge of the Atman; what is my true nature?, what is behind this mind? What a wonderful enquiry it is! Constantly keep on enquiring. All creativity comes from there. The closer

we are to the Atman, the more creative we are. Similarly, *tattva jñānārtha darśanam,* 'seeing the purpose of the pursuit of true knowledge'; *tattva* means 'the truth of a thing'. The other is called *mata,* 'an opinion'. *Mata* is what you and I like a thing to be. But, apart from our liking or disliking, what is the thing in itself? That is called *tattva. Tattvajñāna* is the 'knowledge of Truth'. True philosophy deals with the 'knowledge of Truth'. *Etad jñānam iti proktam,* all 'this is known as *jñāna*'. Why?, these are the things that will lead you to *jñāna. Jñāna* is not easy to get. You have to prepare the mind for it. So, these are the preparatory methods—virtues and graces—by which we acquire knowledge of the Pure Self. *Ajñānam yadato'nyathā,* 'what is not these is called *ajñāna'; '*the opposite of all these is *ajñāna* or ignorance'. When you cultivate the opposite of these, you go deeper and deeper into *ajñāna.*

This is how in this section Śrī Kṛṣṇa has described *jñāna.* We have covered *kṣetra, kṣetrajña* and *jñāna.* Now we come to *jñeya,* 'what is to be known'. What is the object to be known? For what purpose is this knowledge-seeking directed?, to know some profound truth. What is that truth? That is dealt with in the next verse.

ज्ञेयं यत्तत्प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ज्ञात्वाऽमृतमश्नुते।
अनादिमत्परं ब्रह्म न सत्तन्नासदुच्यते॥१२॥

Jñeyam yattat pravakṣyāmi yajjñātvā amṛtam aśnute;
Anādimat param brahma na sattannāsad ucyate — 13. 12

'I shall describe that which has to be known, knowing which one attains to immortality, the immortal Supreme Brahman. It is called neither being nor non-being.'

Verses 7 to 11 dealt with *jñāna. Jñāna* is the knowledge of the highest Reality. And so, Śrī Kṛṣṇa ended by saying in the eleventh verse, 'this is *jñāna*; everything else is *ajñāna.*' But what was spoken about was not *jñāna* itself, but whatever is conducive to the achievement of *jñāna:* the mental and other inner transformations, purity and other essential virtues. This is *not* intellectual knowledge about things; one can have that knowledge without any inner transformation. But here it is *jñāna* of the highest type,

knowledge of Reality. And without these qualities in the mind of men and women, as enumerated here—*amānitvam, adambhitvam,* 'no pride, no vanity' etc.—without all these various virtues mentioned in verses 7 to 11, no spiritual knowledge is going to come. You can only receive sensory knowledge which does not require much alteration in ourselves. Even the animals have some sensory knowledge. But to know what lies above the sensory level—the Imperishable, the Eternal—you need all these virtues to be cultivated. This is emphasized again and again in Vedanta. In Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, you will find him saying: what is the use of mere book knowledge or the knowledge of the changeable universe around you. It can make your physical life a little better. That is all. But real illumination doesn't come until knowledge rises to this eternal dimension beyond the sensory level. That is why these virtues were elaborated, so that we can achieve real knowledge of the absolute reality. Having said that, Śrī Kṛṣṇa now tells us in verse 12, what is *jñeya,* 'that which is to be known'. This spiritual knowledge is an object, using the word object in the usual sense; not in the philosophical sense, because it is never an object; it is 'knowing' becoming 'being'.

And so, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells here: *Jñeyam yat tat pravakṣyāmi. Jñeyam* is a Sanskrit word in the group, *jñāna, jñeya,* and *jñātā. Jñātā* means 'the knower'; *jñeya* means 'the object of knowledge'; and, *jñāna* means 'knowledge'. These are the three. In Vedanta, in the ultimate understanding of reality, these three become fused into one. They are called *tripuṭi—jñāna, jñeya,* and *jñātā.* There is only one; there is nothing separate to be known. That is called elimination of *tripuṭi-bheda*, i.e. the elimination of 'the distinction between the three'. Everything is nothing but the configuration of *jñāna* itself. *Jñāna* means 'Pure Consciousness'. So, Vedanta studied this subject, and studied the nature of Consciousness, nature of *jñāna,* and found that it is the consummation of every experience—the highest consummation of experience. That is how we describe Brahman, the ultimate Reality—*anubhava avasānam, brahma vijñānam:* 'knowledge of Brahman culminates in the experience of Brahman', says Śaṅkarācārya in the early part of his commentary on the *Brahma-sutras.* Therefore, all these—knowledge, knower, and known—become dissolved into that infinite

Consciousness itself. These are only different forms of that Pure Consciousness.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here, *Jñeyam yat tat pravakṣyāmi,* 'I shall now tell you what is called *jñeya*, the truth to be known'; *yat jñātvā amṛtamaśnute,* 'realizing which one experiences immortality'. In inner life, all knowing tends to being; it is not so in our outer life and in physical science. Knowing an atom, the scientist does not become the atom; but, knowing the Brahman, the scientist of spiritual life becomes Brahman; *brahmaved brahmaiva bhavati,* 'the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman' says the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (III. ii. 9).

Up to the sensory level and up to the psychic level everything is mortal, subject to change. It is only beyond that level where there is a profound dimension in the human being and in nature, namely, immortality. This human being can achieve immortality by realizing this *jñeya vastu,* 'the thing to be known'. The remaining portion of this verse is a description of that *jñeya vastu,* the Truth to be known.

Anādimat param brahma, 'that supreme Brahman—of the nature of Pure Consciousness—is *anādi* or beginningless'. Time doesn't touch it. Anything untouched by time is immortal. What else is mortality? Time acting upon a thing is called mortality. That is all. Beyond time is the region of the immortal. Our sages discovered that immortal dimension of the whole universe in every one of us, in every human being, in every item in this universe. The only difference is that, the things of the universe, though they contain that infinite immortal reality, they cannot understand it; only the human system has the capacity to understand and realize this dimension. It can also understand the world outside. The human being alone can understand nature, and can understand the Truth above nature, within oneself. This is the supreme Brahman, beginningless, beyond time. *Na sat tat na asat ucyate,* 'it is said to be neither *sat* nor *asat*'. In the *Ìg-Veda* there is the statement, 'beyond *sat* and *asat*'. *Sat* means 'being', *asat* means 'non-being'. Brahman is beyond these categories. That is why words and thoughts do not reach there. *Yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha,* 'Brahman is that reality from which speech and thought recoil unable to comprehend it', so says the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II. iv. 1). Why do we use

speech?, to understand things. Why do we use concepts?, to understand things. All our education is in utilising our concepts and our speech to understand the world in which we live. But, when we turn that to Brahman, they have no power, they become absolutely ineffective.

When Sri Ramakrishna—an illiterate villager but with tremendous wisdom—was talking with Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, a great scholar in Calcutta, he made a remark that left a deep impression on Vidyasagar's mind. Vidyasagar knew Vedanta. Sri Ramakrishna said (in a colloquial way): 'All things in the world—the Vedas, the Purāṇas, the Tantras, the six system of philosophy—have been defiled [become *ucchiṣṭa*], like food that has been touched by the tongue, for they have been read or uttered by the tongue. Only one thing has not been defiled in this way, and that is Brahman'(*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Indian edition, 1996, p. 102). That is the language. So, Sri Ramakrishna said, everything has become *ucchiṣṭa*, i.e. defiled, except Brahman. Nobody has been able to express what is Brahman through the mouth or through the mind. It is beyond all this. As soon as he said this, Vidyasagar said, 'Oh! That is a remarkable statement. I have learnt something new today' (*ibid*). That is the wonderful way Sri Ramakrishna put this great thought of Vedanta. The ultimate reality can be realized only through silence. All the mystics of the world—Christian, Sufi, Hindu, Buddhist—all have said the same thing: the ultimate reality is beyond speech and thought. You can't comprehend that reality as this or that. You can *become* that. You can't *comprehend* it. That is the idea. So, 'it is neither *sat* nor *asat*'. In another context, in the ninth chapter (9. 19), Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said, *amṛtam caiva mṛtyuśca sat asat ca aham arjuna,* 'I am immortality and also death; and also *sat* and *asat,* "being and non-being"'. Here it is said to be beyond *sat* and *asat*, beyond 'being and non-being'. In Vedantic language, we use these terms, *sat* and *asat*, in different senses according to the context. Cause and effect also are expressed through these two words *asat* and *sat. Sat* is what you can actually see, feel and touch. The effect, *sat,* is what you see. The *asat* is 'the cause', and that you cannot see. A seed contains the plant. Look at the seed, and you can't see the plant. There the plant is *asat.* Put it into the soil, a sprout comes, and it has become *sat.* What you cannot see is so subtle; and what you can see is slightly gross and can be comprehended. In that sense

also the words *sat* and *asat* are used. Vedanta says, none of these categories can be used with respect to that highest reality. Negate all of them. So, the words used to express that reality are, *neti,neti,* 'not this, not this'—a negative way of approach. You cannot express it by any words.

Then what is the meaning of the words Atman and Brahman, you may ask. And Śaṅkarācārya answers—and I have quoted this in the third chapter (Vol. 1, p. 337. *See also*, *ibid*. p. 141): 'the ultimate Reality of the nature of pure Consciousness, infinite and non-dual, cannot be limited by any name, even by the words Atman and Brahman'. We have to use some word, and so we use these words, Atman and Brahman; what is cosmic is Brahman; whatever stands for the individual is Atman. And this and that are one. Atman is Brahman, and Brahman is Atman. Wherever the word Atman has to be used, the Upaniṣads have also used the word Brahman; and where Brahman has to be used, they have also used the word Atman. They are the same. What is in the universe is also in you. Some of these ideas are to be found in the verses that follow.

So, beyond *sat* and beyond *asat* is that ultimate reality, which is the target of our knowledge seeking. We want to realize that truth. It is called *jñeyam*. So, this *jñeyam* belongs to a different category. You can conceive of and also name the rest of the world—the universe which is *vyakta* or manifested. In fact, we conduct our life only by naming things and making a concept of things. That is how we develop knowledge. But all this process ends at that frontier. Beyond that this process cannot go. There Brahman swallows all your concepts, names, forms and everything. That is how Vedanta explains this wonderful idea and this is corroborated by the experience of all the mystics of the world—that Unity is beyond speech and thought. You can just be It, you can just experience It; that is all; nothing more. Speech cannot explain what that is.

Sri Ramakrishna made many fruitless attempts to reveal the nature of his experience while in *samādhi*. 'One day Sri Ramakrishna said emphatically, "I will tell you everything today and will not keep anything secret". He described clearly the centres and the corresponding experiences up to the heart and the throat, and then pointing to the spot between the eyebrows, he said, "The Supreme Self is directly known and the individual

experiences *samādhi* when the mind comes up here…" Saying this the moment he started to describe…he was in *samādhi*. …he tried again to describe it; he was again in *samādhi*. Finally after repeated attempts, he said…with tears, "Alas! I have indeed a desire to tell you everything without concealing anything whatsover, but in spite of all my efforts, the Mother does not allow me to speak; She presses my mouth"'(*Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, vol. 1, pp. 417-18). As soon as you touch it, you are in it. You are dissolved in it. Then again, he gives the example: a salt doll took up this challenge—I shall measure the depth of the ocean. So, it made a big nice measuring rod of salt with all the measuring marks on it. And with great pride and satisfaction, it just walked towards the ocean. As soon as it touched the water, it became dissolved in the ocean. Where is the salt doll now to tell the story of the ocean's depth? This is the example Sri Ramakrishna gives. Mind trying to plumb the infinite depth of the Atman, gets merged in it. In fact, in Taoist thought, in Zen Buddhist thought, and also in Vedanta, there is such a state called 'the death of the mind', *mano nāśa*. That is a high state. So, the mind which tries to understand things in the external world, that mind when it turns towards the Atman, it goes a little distance and dies. So, it is called *mano nāśa.* A wonderful idea in all mystical literature; and today's nuclear scientists—extremely subtle-minded people—are realizing the importance of this wonderful idea, that at the highest level, our conceptions and our thoughts do not function at all. You come to contradictory paradoxical experiences as you go deeper into the nuclear dimension of nature; it is much more so as you go deeper into the human being. That is the situation. In spite of that, they have tried to convey to us all about this great truth: *śānto'yam ātmā,* 'this Atman is silence' says the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. When you begin to speak, you come away from the Atman. That is the greatness of that silence.

In our daily life, practising silence is a great art. We are generally a talkative people. That is why we became third-rate in mind, in thinking, and in action. We don't have that fine mind. But, when we practise silence, and also develop the quality to listen to what others have to say, we develop our minds, to understand better, the higher and higher dimensions of reality. And, when finally you have to respond to the question, 'have you understood?', and when you respond with the answer, 'yes, I have

understood', then the pursuit of knowledge is finished. There is no question at all. What is understanding?, experience, *anubhava. Anubhava* cannot be communicated. Here, all knowing is being. This language that is used here, and some more such expressions which will come in later verses, are simply marvellous. Many of them are taken by the *Gītā* from the Upaniṣads—from *Śvetāśvatara, Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Muṇḍaka,* and *Taittirīya.*

सर्वत: पाणिपादं तत्सर्वतोऽक्षिशिरोमुखम्।
सर्वत: श्रुतिमल्लोके सर्वमावृत्य तिष्ठति॥१३॥

Sarvataḥ pāṇipādam tat sarvato'kṣiśiromukham;
Sarvataḥ śrutimat loke sarvamāvṛtya tiṣṭhati — 13. 13

'With hands and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads, and mouths everywhere, with ears everywhere in the universe—That exists pervading all.'

That *Virāṭ Puruṣa,* that cosmic divine Reality, is being described: *sarvataḥ pāṇipādam tat,* 'It is That with hands and feet everywhere'; *sarvato'kṣiśiromukham,* 'with eyes, heads, and mouths everywhere'; *sarvataḥ śrutimalloke,* 'with ears everywhere'*; sarvamāvṛtya tiṣṭhati,* 'That exists pervading everything here'. That is the Atman. In the eleventh chapter, we read about Arjuna being shown that Universal form, *viśvarūpa* —a tremendous experience; and it was a shattering experience too. Arjuna had to plead with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, 'enough! I want to see your normal human form!' So, here is being described the Infinite as manifested in the universe. There are not two things: world on the one side, and God on the other. God alone is! Brahman alone is! He is infinite Consciousness. From Him the universe comes, in Him it rests, and to Him it returns. That is what the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says about Brahman. *Sarvamāvṛtya tiṣṭhati,* 'It exists pervading everything'. The nearest approach to It is space. Space is inside, outside, all-pervading. In every nook and corner you find that space is there. You enclose some place and you get space there; but, space doesn't know any enclosure. It is undivided everywhere. Space is taken as a good example to illustrate the truth of Atman or Brahman in the Upaniṣads.

सर्वेन्द्रियगुणाभासं सर्वेन्द्रियविवर्जितम्।
असक्तं सर्वभृच्चैव निर्गुणं गुणभोक्तृ च॥१४॥

Sarvendriya guṇābhāsam sarvendriya vivarjitam;
Asaktam sarvabhṛccaiva nirguṇam guṇabhoktṛ ca — 13. 14

'Shining by the functions of all the senses, yet without the senses; unattached, yet sustaining all; devoid of *guṇas,* yet their experiencer.'

'Shining by the functions of all the senses', *sarvendriya guṇābhāsam;* our eyes can see, our ears can hear. Wherefrom does this power come to the sensory system?, from the Atman. It expresses Itself through all these various sense organs. Though manifesting Itself through various sense organs, still It is *sarvendriya vivarjitam,* 'without sense organs at all'. Through you and me, through millions of beings, this Reality experiences things through the sense organs. But, by Itself, It has no sense organs. This is also a *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* statement.

Asaktam, 'unattached'; *sarvabhṛccaiva,* 'which sustains everything'; as Sri Ramakrishna said, the '0' is sustained by the '1' behind it. Then it has the value '10'. Take away the '1', and the '0' has no value; let there be any number of '0's. It is just a series of '0's; that is all. *Nirguṇam,* 'beyond all the three *guṇas*', *sattva, rajas* and *tamas,* but, *guṇabhoktṛ ca,* 'yet, It is enjoying the world through the three *guṇas*.' All these experiences that you and I have is possible only through the *guṇas,* and it is He who is doing it, but He Himself is absolutely free from all *guṇas*. Such paradoxical statements begin to appear when you penetrate the surface of reality which the senses reveal and go deeper and deeper. Even in the theories of physical science, as in nuclear physics, the nature of a photon is observed to have a paradoxical description. It behaves both as a particle and as a wave. That is the wonderful experience. When it is moving through space, it is a wave; when it strikes a target, it is an object, it behaves as a particle. So, what can we say about it? Physics coins a new word, a *wavicle*, a wave-particle combination. Sometimes it is a particle, sometimes it is a wave; we can't predict anything about it. This is how electrons and other subatomic particles and a light photon is described. Because we have gone so deep into the subtle dimension of nature, our logical language cannot function.

That is one of the problems of modern nuclear physics. These are the paradoxical ways of describing also the Atman or Brahman. Some more paradoxical verses are coming.

बहिरन्तश्च भूतानामचरं चरमेव च।
सूक्ष्मत्वात्तदविज्ञेयं दूरस्थं चान्तिके च तत्॥१५॥

Bahirantaśca bhūtānām acaram carameva ca;
Sūkṣmatvāt tadavijñeyam dūrastham cāntike ca tat—13. 15

'Without and within (all) beings; the unmoving and also the moving; because of Its subtlety, It is incomprehensible; It is far and It is also near.'

Bahirantaśca bhūtānām, 'it is inside everything; it is outside everything'. This Atman is both inside and outside everything. How can a thing be both inside and outside everything? Ordinary things cannot be so. They are all spatially limited things. But this is not spatially limited. It can be anywhere; it can be here, it can be there. One famous nuclear physicist was describing the behaviour of an electron. An electron circling around the nucleus of an atom, changes its location. When it is hot, it goes in one direction; when it is cold, it goes in another direction. So, the electron changes its orbit. Now, when you say an electron changes its orbit, you are talking of the electron being like any other material object. But it is not so in the case of an electron. The electron disappears from one orbit and suddenly appears in the other *without passing through the intervening space*, says the physicist. These are all very strange utterances. But today's science is full of such strange utterances.

And the great sages of India, with their highly subtle minds, came across this experience when they dealt with that ultimate Reality. *Bahirantaśca bhūtānām,* 'the Atman is both inside and outside of all beings'. *Acaram,* 'it doesn't move'; *caram eva ca,* 'it also moves'. See the language. This is taken from the *Æśā Upaniṣad.* While dealing with the Atman, the *Æśā Upaniṣad* says, *tat ejati, tat na ejati,* 'It moves or functions, It doesn't move or It is stationary'; *ejati* means *kampana*, 'to move'*;* all action is an *ejana*, 'movement'. A small movement is going on; that is called *ejṛ kampane; kampana* means this kind of small movement.

We have both in nature—movement and also absence of movement. And so, in this case, this Atman moves, *tat ejati;* It moves or else the universe cannot function. All these are similar ideas. *Tat na ejati,* 'It does not move'; when you study It, when you understand It as It really is, there is no movement at all. That is absolutely steady then; there is absolutely no movement. That is the nature of the Atman. It is much more subtle compared to an electron or a photon in behaviour. And so, It does not vibrate, *and* It vibrates. Then, *tat dūre,* 'It is far away'; *tat u antike,* 'It is also the nearest of the near'. This is the language. God is far away, God is also very near to us. These are the experiences of all the mystics—Christian, Sufi, Hindu. They have said the same thing. And physical scientists, dealing with the subtle dimensions of matter, are saying the same thing.

So, let us not think that our normal experience of the world is a standard for everything. Not at all. This is one aspect of Reality revealed by the senses and you try to understand it. But if you go deeper, it will be quite different. We are dealing with extremely subtle aspects of reality in nuclear science; and when you come to Vedanta, we are dealing with the subtlest aspect of Reality. There can be nothing more subtle.

Acaram caram eva ca. Cara means 'to move'. *Acara* means 'no movement'. So, this Atman is both moving and unmoving. Then comes a wonderful idea. *Sūkṣmatvāt tat avijñeyam*, 'because It is extremely subtle, It is not knowable'. *Sūkṣma* means 'subtle'. It is *avijñeyam,* 'not knowable'; you cannot *know* It. *Dūrastham*, 'It is far away'; *ca antike ca tat,* 'and It is also the nearest of the near'.

These are the statements which the Upaniṣads made ages ago, which today the scientific mind is able to appreciate because they are coming across such experiences in their physics also. Professor Fritjof Capra, the author of *The Tao of Physics,* refers to an interview with Werner Heisenberg in his third book *Uncommon Wisdom* (pp. 42-43). Heisenberg is the discoverer of the 'Uncertainty Principle' in modern physics—a very revolutionary discovery, where the principle of causality doesn't apply. Till now we studied the world entirely based on causality. The Newtonian physics was based entirely on causality. Cause and effect are non-different.

Therefore, we can understand things. But Heisenberg came across this Principle of Uncertainty. In the behaviour of a nuclear particle, you can either determine its position *or* its velocity, but *not both.* And without both, you cannot predict its trajectory. That is the language. If you know its position, its velocity will be uncertain, and then, also the reverse. He didn't immediately publish it. In his conversation with Capra, Heisenberg stated his findings and said, when I discovered it, I found it to be a crazy idea. I didn't want to publish it immediately. Then comes a wonderful statement. Prof. Capra says (*Uncommon Wisdom*, pp. 42-43):

'In 1929, Heisenberg spent some time in India as the guest of the celebrated poet Rabindranath Tagore with whom he had long conversations about science and Indian philosophy. This introduction to Indian thought brought Heisenberg great comfort, he told me.…After these conversations with Tagore, he [Heisenberg] said, some of the ideas that had seemed so crazy suddenly made much more sense. That was a great help for me [Heisenberg].'

Just see the beauty of it! And, therefore, when he returned to the West, he decided to publish this 'crazy idea of the principle of indeterminacy!' In this way, as we go deeper, we come across subtle and more subtle realities. At the end of this comes the subtlest Reality, the Atman. That truth is slowly dawning on the thinking minds of the West. 'Subtler than the subtlest' is the expression used in the Upaniṣads about the Atman. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says (I. ii. 20):

Aṇoraṇīyān mahato mahīyān;
ātmāsya jantoḥ nihito guhāyām —

What a wonderful verse is this! In the West, when they listen to these things, when they hear someone expounding these things, they become really fascinated. The case of those whose minds are fully prejudiced is different. A scientific mind is an open mind. All open minds are fascinated by these descriptions. The Atman is *aṇoraṇīyān,* 'smaller than an atom'*; mahato mahīyān*, 'greater than the whole universe'*; ātmā asya jantoḥ nihito guhāyām*, 'that Atman is hidden in the heart of this *jantu,* this ordinary creature'. What wonderful depth one finds there! Such books are not to be studied like any ordinary type of books. They are telling us of something

very profound and yet it is experiential. The ancient sages experienced it; and we all also can experience these subtle truths.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *sūkṣmatvāt tat avijñeyam,* 'because It is extremely subtle, It is not subject to knowledge, It cannot be known'. *Jñeya* means 'a thing that can be known'. *Vijñeyam* means *viśeṣataḥ jñeyam*, 'specially knowing'. *Avijñeyam* means 'impossible to know' in any way. *Dūrastham,* 'it is far away'; *ca antike ca tat,* 'it is also near'. Far as well as near! How can the same thing be far as well as near? That is why the word 'crazy' comes there. From the logical point of view, these are all crazy ideas. There is one principle in logic—a very important principle—which says that a thing cannot have two contradictory natures at the same time. A thing cannot also be its opposite. It can be only this or that; not both at the same time. But, when you come to this subtlest dimension of Reality, logic breaks down. That has been said in the Upaniṣads, in the *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya.* Logic breaks down at the deepest level of experience. Logic takes causality as an important principle, but it breaks down when Heisenberg deals with the most minute particles of nuclear physics. We understand cause and effect; all our sensory knowledge is based on cause and effect. But here, in dealing with subtle things, cause-effect relation breaks down. That is an important point. That is why, in all spiritual experience, you go beyond logic, beyond intellectualism.

This is how the present *śloka* of this chapter puts it: *dūrastham cāntike ca tat,* 'It is both far as well as near'. It is good to know how these ideas are expressed by some of the world's mystics—Christian mystics and equally so Sufi mystics. And because they experienced these 'crazy' things and uttered them which were too high to grasp, the orthodox Muslims killed them; orthodox Christian church also tried to kill them. If Heisenberg had been a religious man, he would have been killed. He was a scientist, and therefore, nobody troubled him. In dogmatic religion, unfortunately, there is *the* fixed track; one should go only on that track. That is the rule—except in India. In India, we can have all such 'extremely crazy' experiences; we have got a mind to receive them. We know that the deeper you go to Reality, the more crazy aspects will appear. We know it very well. That is why we don't kill mystics in India. We revere them; but some Christian and several Sufi mystics were not revered by orthodox Muslims and were

killed. There is a very famous book by Evelyn Underhill on mysticism. She quotes one Christian mystic Sūso: 'That nameless something which is great enough to be God and small enough to be me'. Here you are in the midst of highly paradoxical language. We think that this sensory level is the region of greatest joy. The knowledge, the joy, the pleasure that we get at the sensory level are nothing compared to what is available beyond that level. That is the great statement of Vedanta. That is why some gifted people go in that direction. The human being alone can have spiritual experience; no animal can have it. They are tied down by the sensory system. We can detach ourselves from the sensory system. We have the power to do it, and then to experience something higher.

That is the great achievement of the sages of the Upaniṣads. They thoroughly investigated the whole gamut of ideas associated with this subject by personal enquiry and experience, and gave us a profound body of truths which we call *Śruti*, and which is most authoritative because it is based on experience which you can re-experience yourself. That is its scientific strength and validity.

This is the sentence which I wish to specially mention here, because we are living in a very scientific age. Every day we are going toward more and more subtle dimensions of reality. Even in biology, in genetics, as we go deeper, we come across extremely subtle aspects of Reality. And God alone knows how many new discoveries will come within the next few decades when this subject of biology goes deep into living matter! I used to say, molecule is not a very subtle entity. Behind the molecule is the atom. Today's molecular biology has not gone to that atomic level. Suppose if one dives deeper to the atomic level in the field of biology, and then to its subatomic level where physics has gone, then what new discoveries will come out of such studies in biology! Many of these great truths of Vedanta will be re-established through the parallel truths of physical science when these developments will take place in the coming decades. That is why Swami Vivekananda said (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 1, p. 15):

'…the Hindu is only glad that what he has been cherishing in his bosom for ages is going to be taught in more forcible language, and with further

light from the latest conclusions of science.'

Vedanta has nothing to fear from physical science; it has everything to gain from science. What Vedanta thought to be true, science is proving it in a much more demonstrable form. That is the Indian attitude towards scientific discoveries. In the West, Christian theology never allowed science to proceed deeper and deeper; they tried to stop it, and even killed a few scientists. But truth is powerful; it has to become manifest; it has to be victorious, as our *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* has said, *Satyam eva jayate,* 'truth alone triumphs'. So, a few well-tested truths of science could demolish the whole dogmas of Christian religion in the modern West. That is the Hindu's firm conviction. We want science, we want more science. We have tremendous new discoveries to make. And our sages have done it by their own experience. They have given us hints and suggestions. They will be re-strengthened by modern scientific discoveries. That is the great theme.

The next few verses are also equally beautiful, marvellous, and make us think deeply, so that a little vibration of the subtle elements of truth may come to us. That is the beauty of this chapter. In the earlier chapters, except in the seventh, we never had this kind of deep scientific presentation—the way it has been presented to us in this thirteenth chapter.

We now studied verses 13, 14 and 15 of this chapter, dealing with that supreme Reality which we have the capacity to realize, and which is the one source of this universe. Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues in the same strain in the next two verses:

अविभक्तं च भूतेषु विभक्तमिव च स्थितम्।
भूतभर्तृ च तज्ज्ञेयं ग्रसिष्णु प्रभविष्णु च॥१६॥

Avibhaktam ca bhūteṣu vibhaktam iva ca sthitam;
Bhūtabhartṛ ca tajjñeyam grasiṣṇu prabhaviṣṇu ca— 13. 16

'Itself undivided, It exists as if divided in beings; It is to be known as sustaining beings, and devouring, as well as generating (them).'

You are different, I am different, everything is different here. But, He is *avibhaktam*, 'undivided'; *bhūteṣu vibhaktam iva ca sthitam*, 'existing in all things as if divided'. This verse gives the Upaniṣadic idea: from which all

beings are born, in which they are sustained, and to which they return at the end of the dissolution of the Universe. Verse 17 goes one step more:

ज्योतिषामपि तज्ज्योतिस्तमसः परमुच्यते।
ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं ज्ञानगम्यं हृदि सर्वस्य विष्ठितम्॥१७॥

Jyotiṣāmapi tajjyotiḥ tamasaḥ paramucyate;
Jñānam jñeyam jñānagamyam hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam—13. 17

'That Light is the Light of all lights; It is said to be beyond darkness; (It is) Knowledge, the object of knowledge, and the Goal of knowledge, dwelling in the hearts of all.'

This Atman or Brahman, this *jñeya vastu,* is 'the Light of all lights', *jyotiṣām api tat jyotiḥ.* Whatever light you find in this world, is only the light coming out of that Light of Atman. That means, these things that light up the world get their light from the Atman or Brahman. So, he is called 'the Light of all lights'. That is a very wonderful investigation in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.* In other Upaniṣads also this idea comes, especially in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad.* How to describe the Atman, how to describe pure Consciousness, absolute and non-dual? There this language is used (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, II. ii. 15):

Na tatra sūryo bhāti na candra tārakam
Nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yam agniḥ;
Tam eva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam
Tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti —

'There the sun cannot illumine, nor the moon, nor the stars, nor this lightning, and what to speak of the fire in your house. The Atman shines and these things shine *after* it. By Its light, the whole universe is lighted.'

Tasya bhāsā, 'by its *bhāsā,* light'; *idam sarvam,* 'this whole manifested universe'; *vibhāti,* 'is lighted'. So, it is called, *jyotiṣām jyotiḥ,* 'the Light of all lights'. The sun is a source of light to us. But that sun itself is a product of the Light of Atman—Light of the Atman coming through the sun, coming through every source of light. The only thing that is endowed with light as its *own nature* is pure Consciousness. Everything else is purely physical entities, dull and dead entities. So, all light is the product of the

Atman which is of the nature of pure Consciousness. Pure Consciousness is always Light. It can illumine itself; It can illumine physical things as well.

In the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa,* you find that wonderful statement: *Yasya tejasā viddhaḥ sūryo tapati,* 'this sun shines, impregnated with the Light of the Atman', Light of Brahman. That is the language. From the beginning, the sages were in search of the answer to this question: what is the source of light in this world? In a whole chapter in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* this subject comes. 'How do you live and work? Under what light?' Naturally, we say now, 'we have the electric light, the torch light, etc.'. These light energies are also taken from the sun. So, finally we go to solar energy. What is behind the solar energy? This discussion goes on and finally the answer comes: *ātmanaiva ayam jyotiṣā te palyayate, karma kurute,* 'it is through the Light of the Atman that we exist, move about, and perform actions' (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV. iii. 6). Only, we do not know it, because, nearby lights are gross enough to be known by us while this Light is subtle and hence cannot be easily known, cannot be seen; it is just like the case of the solar energy which is, in quantity, a fraction of some of the energy of the stars; as soon as the sun shines, the stars are shut out. We can't see the stars. Similarly, the little lights that are around us, including our little intellect, shuts out the light of the Atman for us. That is why we say that we live by this or that light. But when you eliminate all these lights as product of something else, and when you seek that 'something else', the answer finally comes: God's Light lights the universe, lights everything. Suns, stars, and all the galactic systems get their light only from the Light of all lights, Brahman. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said about this Light of the Atman, *jyotiṣām api tat jyotiḥ. Tamasaḥ param ucyate,* 'It is said to be beyond all darkness'. There is not a trace of darkness in Brahman—pure Light: *tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti,* 'by Its Light, the whole universe is lighted'. That is why God is described as Light. This is physical light; we have got intellectual light; but this is the Light of pure Consciousness. And that Light is there not only in nature outside, but in the human beings too, and everywhere, because the universe has come from that Light only. We consider the origin of the universe to be the Light of pure Consciousness. Every energy in this world is an apparent transformation of that pure Light of Consciousness. That is the Vedantic language. Much of modern astronomical language is coming

closer and closer to this statement of Vedanta. In another fifty years more, tremendous developments may come. These are all the products of experience by the brilliant minds of the sages, not by the minds of ordinary neurotic type of people. Great intellects—morally great people—experienced these truths, and communicated them to humanity through the Upaniṣads.

Jñānam jñeyam jñānagamyam, 'knowledge, what is to be known, and the goal of all knowledge'; where shall we find all these three?, *hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam,* 'they are established in the heart of all beings'. Within your heart, all these three—*jñānam jñeyam* and *jñānagamyam*—are there. It is not far; it is near, nearest of the near. Meister Eckhart, a German mystic, has said something like this: God is nearer to me than myself. He is just as near to wood and stone also, but they know it not. They do not understand it; the human mind can catch it, can realize it. The other objects of the world do not have that organic capacity to know this truth. This is the thirteenth century Eckhart. He was a real Advaitin. And because he was an Advaitin, he was caught by the Inquisition: 'come, we want to examine your doctrines'. Fortunately, he died before the Inquisition started. So, he was saved; otherwise, he would have been hanged because of such a profound teaching: God is a Personal thing, but beyond it, is the Impersonal. And he used a new word for the Impersonal: Godhood. This is God, and that is Godhood, the Impersonal—*saguṇa brahman* and *nirguṇa brahman* of Vedanta.

Jñānam jñeyam jñānagamyam hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam, 'He is established in the heart of all'. What a high status a human being gets in the light of Vedanta—that behind this body-mind complex is a profound truth, a very precious thing is there; only, we do not know it. And it is good for us to try to know it. Our own mystics refer to it in various languages—like the one song sung by Meera Bai, the mystic poetess of Rajasthan: *Rāmratan maine pāyo,* 'I have received the Rāmratan, the Gem of Rāma in my heart'. Similarly, others also say so in different languages. We do not know the tremendous power of God hidden within us. Because we do not know it, we are wandering about here and there, constantly, in search of happiness, not knowing that the highest truth is 'here'. A tremendous world of reality is within me. This is the teaching central to Vedanta. 'Each soul is potentially

divine', is the first sentence Swami Vivekananda gives, when he summarizes the whole Vedantic teaching (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 1, p. 124):

• 'Each soul is potentially divine.'

• 'The goal is to manifest this divine within'; (how?) 'by controlling nature, external and internal.' (There is an internal nature; our anger, our pride, our vanity, and our attachments—all these are internal nature. We have to overcome them, and control external nature also.)

• 'Do this … and be free.' (Realize this truth and then you are perfectly free.)

• 'Doctrines or dogmas, or rituals or books, or temples or forms are but secondary details.' The main thing is: are you manifesting the divine within? Whatever methods you use, it doesn't matter. That is how Swami Vivekananda summarizes the whole teaching of Vedanta in three or four lines.

In the heart of all beings the Lord is hidden, He is present there. All the Upaniṣads proclaim this truth. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says (I. iii. 12):

Eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu gūḍho ātmā na prakāśate;

'This Atman is present in every being, but lying hidden'. We have to search for it and that means, you develop your mind for a tremendous adventure like climbing the Mt. Everest. Courage is needed, because the path to discover Him is very difficult. It is like '*walking on the edge of a razor*', *kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā* (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I. iii. 14). The mind must be very subtle to understand this truth. These are the various statements in the Upaniṣads. So, in this chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is bringing the sense of those great teachings to instruct Arjuna and all of us. Then He concludes:

इति क्षेत्रं तथा ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं चोक्तं समासतः।
मद्भक्त एतद्विज्ञाय मद्भावायोपपद्यते॥१८॥

Iti kṣetram tathā jñānam jñeyam coktam samāsataḥ;
Madbhaktaḥ etadvijñāya madbhāvāya upapadyate — 13. 18

‘Thus, *kṣetra,* also knowledge, and that which has to be known, have been briefly stated. Knowing this, My devotee becomes fitted for My state.’

‘I have explained to you in succinct form’, *uktam samāsataḥ; kṣetra,* ‘the body’; *jñāna,* ‘knowledge’; and *jñeya,* ‘the object of knowledge’, that supreme Divine. All these three I have explained to you ‘in brief’, *samāsataḥ*, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *Madbhaktaḥ,* ‘My devotee’; *etat vijñāya,* ‘understanding all this’, these three; *madbhāvāya upapadyate,* ‘becomes fit to become one with Me.’ Because, with the knowledge of the body, of knowledge, and of the object of knowledge, the whole of truth is realized. Body is only a container. Precious things are there in it; bad things are also there. At the deepest level the Divine spark is hidden within this body. That is the value of this body. It has infinite value, like a box containing a very costly gem; the box is ordinary, but because it contains a profound gem, it has high value. So also is the human body called *kṣetra.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa started this chapter dealing with the *kṣetra: idam śarīram kaunteya kṣetram iti abhidīyate,* ‘Arjuna, this body is called a *kṣetra*’, where you sow your actions, and reap the results of your actions. That is why it is called the *kṣetra,* ‘the field’. And there is somebody here who knows this field, who can understand this field; that is called *kṣetrajña,* ‘the knower of the field’. Therefore, there are two things: the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajña.* Till now physical science understood only the *kṣetra.* They didn’t care for the *kṣetrajña.* But now in nuclear science, they have become aware of the significance of *kṣetrajña.* Therefore, they use the words, ‘observer’ and ‘observed’. Till now they were busy with the ‘observed data’. Whatever the senses reveal of the world is called ‘observed data’. The observer was not seriously taken into consideration. Now they say that the observer plays a great part in the deducing of knowledge of the observed. Merely the observed cannot produce knowledge; the observer also participates. So it is called ‘participator’. One of the nuclear scientists uses the word, ‘participator’. The scientist, his or her mind, is a participator in the creation of nuclear knowledge. What a wonderful change it is! So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña,* and of the supreme Reality, the *jñeya.* He said in the very beginning of this chapter: ‘Know Me to be the *Kṣetrajña* in all *kṣetras.* I am the one *Kṣetrajña* in all the *kṣetras.’* The ‘Observer’ is only one; ‘observed’ are many. He seems to be many because you see Him

through various divisions, various objects. This is beautifully expressed by the nuclear scientist, Schrodinger, in his book, *What is Life:* 'Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown'. See the language in which the scientist is saying. Consciousness, or *cit* or *caitanya* in Sanskrit, is only a singular, never a plural. Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is inconceivable. We cannot think of our Consciousness in that way. But, if you think that, so many people here are conscious, so many animals are conscious, and so there is a plurality in Consciousness, then that plurality is only due to the medium through which Consciousness manifests itself. Really, there are not separate centres of Consciousness. Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is inconceivable, is the last utterance of Schrodinger. That is Vedanta. We have studied this subject, the nature of knowledge, and we came to this conclusion. There is only one infinite pure Consciousness.

As I said several times, within the solar system every type of energy is a manifestation of solar energy. All things that are obtained in the world look different, but they are all solar energy in various forms. Nothing else is there. In this way, this verse finally concludes: *Iti kṣetram tathā jñānam jñeyam coktam samāsataḥ,* 'I have thus spoken to you about all these three: *kṣetra, jñāna,* and *jñeya.*' If you realize this truth, you become free, you become one with Me. *Mad bhaktaḥ etat vijñāya,* 'My devotee, realizing this truth', that within this body is the infinite Atman, *mat bhāvāya upapadyate,* 'becomes one with Me.' The human status is very high. Not only is the infinite there, but a human being alone can realize it. He or she has the organic capacity. That is the uniqueness of the human being among the products of nature's evolution. The next step in evolution will be only to discover the truth, to realize it; now it is only a promise. But the next stage of human evolution is not organic, is not high technology, industry, etc.; not at all. Does humanity realize this truth? Does it turn its attention to realize this truth in oneself? That is progressive human evolution. If millions of people realize this truth, even a little, the world will be transformed. That is how Vedanta views this subject. Take our own country. If ten per cent of our people realize this truth even a little, the whole nation will become transformed. That comes from 'value orientation' of education, politics, and all aspects of life—to realize that the spark of the Divine is within me and

that the same spark is in other persons also. We are essentially one. This is to be demonstrated by life, by realization.

Now, the same subject is going to be dealt with from the point of view of Sāṅkhya Philosophy. Different words are therefore used; till now it was all Vedanta. But Sāṅkhya also has dealt with the subject. However, Vedanta does not accept all that Sāṅkhya says. Sāṅkhya is dualistic; Vedanta is monistic Advaita. And so, except this truth—that *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*, nature and the Self, are two distinct independent realities, and that the *Puruṣas* are innumerable—Vedanta accepts the rest of Sāṅkhya teaching. In the *Gītā* you find a lot of Sāṅkhya nomenclature and ideas. In the next chapter also Sāṅkhya will come. The three *guṇas—sattva, rajas,* and *tamas* —is also a Sāṅkhya teaching. The word *Prakṛti* or nature is a Sāṅkhya term. *Puruṣa* or Self is also a Sāṅkhya word. The difference between Vedanta and Sāṅkhyas lies in this: Sāṅkhya will say that there are millions of *Puruṣas* or souls. There Vedanta goes against Sāṅkhya by stressing the unity of all *Puruṣas*. Sāṅkhya unifies the whole world into one *Prakṛti* or nature. That itself is a great advance in thought. Different manifestations in the universe are all evolutes of one single *Prakṛti.* So, in Sāṅkhya, as far as *Prakṛti* is concerned, it is Advaita; but, when it deals with the Self, it is *bahu*, i.e., plural. There Vedanta says, 'No. *Puruṣa* is also one. And *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* are also one and the same. They are the products of the same Reality.'

So, on that basis, Śrī Kṛṣṇa discusses this subject in Sāṅkhyan terminology, where *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* become *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa. Prakṛti* means nature, this whole world that you experience. That primordial *Prakṛti* or *avyakta* manifests in various forms here through an evolutionary process. That is the age-old Sāṅkhyan teaching. Cosmic evolution came in modern thought only in the last (nineteenth) century. For us, it is 4000 years old! *Prakṛti* and *pradhāna* are similar words. *Puruṣa* is the living soul in human beings. Let us study *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* from this point of view. The next verse says:

प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव विद्ध्यनादी उभावपि।
विकारांश्च गुणांश्चैव विद्धि प्रकृतिसम्भवान्॥१९॥

Prakṛtim puruṣam caiva viddhyanādī ubhāvapi;
Vikārāmśca guṇāmścaiva viddhi prakṛtisambhavān— 13. 19

'Know that *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* are both beginningless; and know also that all modifications and *guṇas* are born of *Prakṛti.*'

Prakṛtim puruṣam caiva viddhi anādī ubhau api, 'know that *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* are both beginningless'. *Ádī* means 'beginning'; *anādī* means 'without beginning'. Go back as far as you can, and still they are there. That is *anādī. Ubhau* means 'both'. And then, *vikārāmśca guṇāmścaiva viddhi prakṛtisambhavān,* 'know all modifications and *guṇas* to be born of *Prakṛti*'. *Vikārāmśca*, 'modifications also' that you find in this world. Take a piece of wood, shape it into a table; then it becomes an object. It is *Prakṛti* that is converted into the wood; and it is the same *Prakṛti* which is further converted into the table. So, all *vikāras* or modifications are of *Prakṛti.* Transformations and changes can take place only in *Prakṛti. Guṇāmścaiva,* 'and *guṇas* too'—*sattva, rajas,* and *tamas*—are *Prakṛti's* manifestation; *viddhi prakṛtisambhavān,* 'know them to be born of *Prakṛti*'.

The whole cosmos is the product of *Prakṛti's* evolution. Then, where is the place for *Puruṣa*? *Puruṣa* is there as the intelligent principle. Sāṅkhyas are very clever. *Puruṣa* is inactive according to the Sāṅkhyas. All activity belongs to *Prakṛti.* So, *Prakṛti,* being unintelligent, is blind but active; *Puruṣa* can see, but it is inactive. Between the two, evolution has to take place. How does it take place? *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* join together and start this evolution. How does that happen? They give an illustration. Here is a blind man and here is a lame man. So, what did they do? The lame man sat on the shoulder of the blind man and both started moving perfectly well; one showed the way, the other walked. So, *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* belong to this category. That is how the Sāṅkhyas describe the nature of evolution. Vedanta is different in its approach: *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* are one and the same reality. That supreme Brahman is *Puruṣa,* pure Consciousness. It is out of Brahman that *Prakṛti* comes, and *Prakṛti* evolves. *Puruṣa* or Brahman is there in every object of evolution. Vedanta accepts evolution in that way.

कार्यकरणकर्तृत्वे हेतुः प्रकृतिरुच्यते।
पुरुषः सुखदुःखानां भोक्तृत्वे हेतुरुच्यते॥२०॥

Kāryakaraṇakartṛtve hetuḥ prakṛtirucyate;
Puruṣaḥ sukhaduḥkhānām bhoktṛtve heturucyate — 13. 20

'In the production of the body and the senses, *Prakṛti* is said to be the cause; in the experience of pleasure and pain, *Puruṣa* is said to be the cause.'

Kārya karaṇa kartṛtve hetuḥ prakṛtirucyate, 'in the production of body and senses *Prakṛti* is the cause'. *Kārya* means 'body', the effect. *Karaṇa* means 'instruments like sense organs'; *karaṇa* in perception means 'instruments of perception'. The eye is the instrument of seeing; ear is the instrument of hearing. That is called *karaṇa*. And *Kāraṇa* means 'cause'. So wherever there is *kārya* and *kāraṇa*, effect and cause, its cause is *Prakṛti*. Or, *kārya karaṇa kartṛtve*, 'wherever there is action by this kind of instrument dealing with cause and effect relation;' *hetuḥ prakṛtirucyate*, 'the cause is Prakṛti.' You take food and digest it. You get strength out of it; you can see *Prakṛti* there. In all of this, *Prakṛti* is present. But where is *Puruṣa's* presence? *Puruṣaḥ sukhaduḥkhānām bhoktṛtve heturucyate,* 'wherever there is the experience of happiness and misery, you can see *Puruṣa* there'. *Prakṛti* has no happiness or misery. It is dull dead matter. Only because there is *Puruṣa,* you experience happiness and misery. A table or a chair has no happiness or misery. But living beings, even the most minute creatures, have that happiness and misery. There you find *Prakṛti* plus some other factor. That other factor is *Puruṣa.* So, in common language we say, wherever there is happiness and misery *Puruṣa* is present there. Where there is only pure existence, that is called *Prakṛti.* The sun exists; it is *Prakṛti.* Similarly, the whole starry system exists and it is all *Prakṛti.* But in all living beings *Prakṛti* alone won't do; you have to bring in the second factor—*Puruṣa.* You see *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* combined together in all living entities.

Puruṣaḥ sukhaduḥkhānām bhoktṛtve heturucyate, 'in the experience of pleasure and pain *Puruṣa* is said to be the cause'. *Bhoktṛ* means 'experiencer'; what a wonderful language: *bhoga* means experience, and

bhoktṛ means experiencer. So, in a tiny insect, you find *bhoktṛtva*, 'enjoyership'. *Somebody* is experiencing pleasure and pain. You can't use the words pleasure and pain unless there is a *bhoktṛ* or 'experiencer'. In Sanskrit that is called *anubhava*, and in English, experience. That insect has *anubhava*, but has the sun any *anubhava*?, no. The sun, moon, stars, etc., do not have any *anubhava.* They have no experience. Experience is a new category that appeared in evolution when the living cell appeared. Till then, there was no experience. Everything was only *sat,* being or existence. The sun *is*. The stars *are.* That is called pure being. We call it *sat.* As soon as you come to organic evolution, and are dealing with that little insect, you find *sat* and *cit* coming into the picture. *Cit* is that *Puruṣa,* that experiencer. Without an experiencer, there is no experience. And that experience may be of sorrow or of joy. But so far as Brahman is concerned, it is always bliss, *ānanda.* That is its nature. So, *sat-cit-ānanda* is the nature of the ultimate Reality. It is the nature of all of us too. But at the ordinary level, we don't know this truth. And so we weep, we suffer, forgetting our true nature. 'We suffer, feeling helpless due to delusion', as the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* says: *Anīśayā śocati muhyamānaḥ.* That is a wonderful treatment in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (III. i. 1, 2)*:*

Dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā
Samānam vṛkṣam pariṣasvajāte;
Tayoranyaḥ pippalam svādvatti
Anaśnan anyo abhicākaśīti —

'Two birds of beautiful plumage who are great friends, and having similar names, sit on the self same tree. Of these, one eats the fruit of divergent tastes, and the other looks on without eating'. This body is like that tree. The two birds are the two selves—the higher Self and the lower self. 'One is full of bliss; the other is sometimes in joy and sometimes in sorrow'. That is lower self called 'you' and 'I'—our ego, our limited individuality. But, when one realizes that Truth, that higher Self, the whole thing changes. One becomes full of joy realizing that one's nature is *sat-cit-ānanda.* Śaṅkarācārya's poem is meant to teach people this Truth: *Cidānandarūpaḥ śivo'ham śivo'ham,* 'essentially we are that *Śiva*, of the nature of *cit* and *ānanda.*'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here, *kārya karaṇa kartṛtve hetuḥ prakṛtiḥ ucyate,* 'wherever there is action-reaction going on, changes going on, and instruments to bring about that change, and with them when you try to understand something or achieve something, you find *Prakṛti* there.' But wherever there is pleasure and pain, there you find *Puruṣa,* the Intelligent Principle. This is the nature of the world—both *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* together. *Kṣetra* has no pleasure or pain; *kṣetrajña* has pleasure and pain. Here, in this particular context, we call it *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*.

पुरुषः प्रकृतिस्थो हि भुङ्क्ते प्रकृतिजान्गुणान्।
कारणं गुणसङ्गोऽस्य सदसद्योनिजन्मसु॥२१॥

Puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi bhuṅkte prakṛtijān guṇān;
Kāraṇam guṇasaṅgo'sya sadasad yoni janmasu — 13. 21

'*Puruṣa* established in *Prakṛti,* experiences the *guṇas* born of *Prakṛti;* the reason of his birth in good and evil wombs is his attachment to the *guṇas.*'

Why is it that we suffer? This *Puruṣa* is within the *Prakṛti;* body is the *Prakṛti; Puruṣa* is inside it. Let *Puruṣa* remain inside the *Prakṛti;* there is no harm in it; but when *Puruṣa* is attached to the *Prakṛti,* then difficulties arise. *Puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi,* '*Puruṣa* seated within *Prakṛti*'; *bhuṅkte prakṛtijān guṇān,* 'experiences all the *guṇas* arising out of *Prakṛti*'. 'It is mine', 'it is mine'—with that attitude, the *Puruṣa* experiences the *guṇas. Kāraṇam guṇasaṅgo'sya sat asat yoni janmasu,* 'this attachment to the *guṇas* of *Prakṛti—sattva, rajas,* and *tamas*—is the cause of the bondage of *Puruṣa*'. Otherwise, the *Puruṣa* could be free. *Sat asat yoni janmasu,* the *Puruṣa* 'is born in various bodies, good or bad'; it goes on life after life. As long as attachment to the *guṇas* of *Prakṛti* remains, this kind of birth and death continues. There is no harm in being within the *Prakṛti,* but when we get attached to the *guṇas* of *Prakṛti,* then we have to experience all its ups and downs, experience birth and death. That bondage to *Prakṛti* must be ended and that is what the Sāṅkhyas call *kaivalya,* 'aloneness'; 'I am alone'; 'though I am with the *Prakṛti,* I have nothing to do with it', 'I am detached'. That is called *kaivalya.* That is their idea of liberation. Vedanta also uses the word *kaivalya,* but the Sāṅkhyan meaning does not apply to

the Vedantic way of speaking of *kaivalya*; 'absolute freedom', 'I am free from all attachments', 'I am free from all bondage', 'I am myself, I am not something else'; 'there is nothing else other than me'; that kind of freedom Vedanta gives to everyone in this very life, not in some future state of existence. In Vedanta, we use the word *sākṣī* or witness to describe the *kaivalya* state of the Sāṅkhyas. That is the subject of the next verse.

उपद्रष्टानुमन्ता च भर्ता भोक्ता महेश्वरः।
परमात्मेति चाप्युक्तो देहेऽस्मिन्पुरुषः परः॥२२॥

Upadraṣṭā anumantā ca bhartā bhoktā maheśvaraḥ;
Paramātmeti cāpyukto dehe'smin puruṣaḥ paraḥ — 13. 22

'And in this very body there is also the Supreme *Puruṣa* called the Looker-on, the Permitter, the Supporter, the Experiencer, the Great Lord and the *Paramātman*.'

In the present verse Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *asmin dehe*, 'in this body'; *puruṣaḥ paraḥ*, there is also the one called 'Supreme *Puruṣaḥ*', who is *upadraṣṭā,* 'the Looker-on or Witness'; *anumantā,* 'the Permitter'; *bhartā,* 'the Supporter'; *bhoktā,* 'the Experiencer'; *maheśvaraḥ,* 'the Supreme Lord'; and *paramātmā,* 'Paramātman'.

There is this living being caught up in *Prakṛti,* and becoming subject to the impress of *Prakṛti,* becomes its slave, and gets caught in the cycle of birth and death. It doesn't know its own nature, its own freedom. Essentially, the *Puruṣa* or the Self is unattached, but we are all attached to the things of *Prakṛti. Asaṅgo'yam puruṣaḥ* is a statement in the Upaniṣad. *Asaṅgaḥ ayam puruṣaḥ* means 'essentially unattached is the *Puruṣaḥ',* the Atman or the Self. But we are all attached and caught up in the *Prakṛti.* That is one aspect of our personality. But Vedanta peers a little deeper; Sāṅkhya also peered a little deeper, and discovered the undivided, unattached Self behind the attached self.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa definitely tells us that in this human body of ours there is a second reality, the higher dimension of the self. This little self, caught up in nature, is not the real Self. There is a higher Self. Try to realize that. Even a little realization of it can improve human life. What to speak of a higher

realization! All over India today, a little awareness of this truth will make a tremendous change in the human situation. We are small individualities today; we will then become something bigger, something greater. We will then feel for others, dig our affections in others. This little self cannot do that. The other Self can do it because it is free. This is moral education of men and women—the beginnings of spiritual evolution. Without this first step, no other step towards spiritual evolution can be taken. That is the importance of this great verse.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa concludes this Sāṅkhyan approach, this Sāṅkhyan terminology, with Vedantic orientation, in verse 23:

य एवं वेत्ति पुरुषं प्रकृतिं च गुणैः सह।
सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि न स भूयोऽभिजायते॥२३॥

Ya evam vetti puruṣam prakṛtim ca guṇaiḥ saha;
Sarvathā vartamāno'pi na sa bhūyo'bhijāyate — 13. 23

'He or she who thus knows the *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* together with the *guṇas,* whatever be his or her life, is not born again.'

Ya evam vetti puruṣam, 'he or she who understands this *Puruṣa',* which has now been expounded; and, *prakṛtim ca guṇaiḥ saha,* 'and *Prakṛti* with all her *guṇas*'—*sattva, rajas,* and *tamas*; such a person, *sarvathā vartamāno'pi,* 'whatever may be his or her way of life'; *na sa bhūyo'bhijāyate,* 'has no more birth'. That person may be a small vegetable seller in the market, or a family head or housewife, or a saint, or an intellectual, but if he or she has realized this truth, then such a person has no more birth and death. It is only for that lower self caught up in *Prakṛti* that there is birth and death. For the higher Self which is free, there is no birth or death. It is free. That is why it is said here, *ya evam vetti puruṣam prakṛtim ca guṇaiḥ saha sarvathā vartamāno'pi na sa bhūyo'bhijāyate.* Wherever you are, whatever be your activity, your inner development can take place. Activity has nothing to do with that development. This activity is going on, but inwardly your awareness gets deeper. You then realize your true Self—even though a little. This is how Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks of a truth which all can practise in this very life. Spiritual progress is a palpable experience for all

men and women. It is not a mere theory or dogma, or some sort of superstition, or as others would say in modern language, an attempt to fool oneself. It is not at all so; it is something genuine. You grow in stature. You grow in spiritual awareness—the idea of *vikāsa, vyakti-vikāsa* comes here*;* that is the real *vikāsa* or expansion. Be aware of your true Self, which is undivided though apparently divided by the body. That realization comes to the person.

The next two verses say: This truth we have to realize, and there are several ways to do that. When I say that, in us, there is the *puruṣa* caught up by nature, and also the *Puruṣa* which is an observer, a mere witness, ever free, the *Paramātman* or supreme Self, how to make this little self realize its true nature as that higher Self? There are so many methods for it and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is referring to these methods in two verses, 24 and 25.

ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्यन्ति केचिदात्मानमात्मना।
अन्ये सांख्येन योगेन कर्मयोगेन चापरे॥२४॥

Dhyānenātmani paśyanti kecit ātmānam ātmanā;
Anye sāṅkhyena yogena karmayogena cāpare — 13. 24

'Some by meditation behold the Self in their own heart with the help of purified internal organs, others by the path of knowledge, others again by *karma-yoga.*'

Kecit, 'some people'; *paśyanti,* 'realize' this truth; *dhyānena,* 'by *dhyāna,* through meditation', by controlling the senses, controlling the mind, turning the energy inward to discover that very subtle reality that is present here as the witness, or the *sākṣī.* That feeling comes. *Dhyānena ātmani paśyanti kecit; ātmani* means 'in oneself'; *kecit paśyanti,* 'some people perceive' this truth; *dhyānena,* 'through the method of meditation'; *ātmānam ātmanā,* 'by oneself one discovers one's true Self'. *Anye*, 'some others' realise this 'through *sāṅkhya yoga*', *sāṅkhya yogena*; and, *apare karma yogena*, 'others through *karma yoga*'. We don't say there is only one method. Plenty of methods are there. So, broadly speaking, these are the four methods: *dhyāna yoga*, *sāṅkhya yoga* and *karma yoga* mentioned here, and *bhakti yoga.* Actually, there are any number of methods, and our

philosophy gives us complete freedom to follow any method, but the point is that we must realize this truth. Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtra* says (*Samādhi pāda*, 39): *yathā abhimata dhyānāt vā*, 'by meditating in ways which satisfies your own inner heart'; accordingly, you follow your method. There are some methods which Patañjali prescribes, and then he gives freedom by saying, *yathā abhimata*, 'what really appeals to you' follow that; but achieve this. The main thing is achieving; the method may be what suits your own temperament and convenience.

अन्ये त्वेवमजानन्तः श्रुत्वाऽन्येभ्य उपासते।
तेऽपि चातितरन्त्येव मृत्युं श्रुतिपरायणाः॥२५॥

Anye tvevamajānantaḥ śrutvānyebhya upāsate;
Te'pi cātitarantyeva mṛtyum śrutiparāyaṇāḥ — 13. 25

'Others again, not knowing thus, worship as they have heard from others. Even these go beyond death, regarding what they have heard as the Supreme Refuge.'

There are some others who haven't that capacity to go straightaway for meditation or *jñāna-yoga, karma-yoga,* etc. Such people, *evam ajānantaḥ,* 'not knowing these methods'; what do they do? *Śrutvā anyebhyaḥ upāsate,* 'they hear from others an advice and follow that'. Then they slowly develop this knowledge and experience for themselves. Here we have *bhakti* where we depend upon a Guru as well as a scripture, and thus we slowly develop our spiritual life. *Te'pi ca atitaranti eva mṛtyum,* 'they also will cross this *samsāra*, this ocean of birth and death', because they are *śrutiparāyaṇāḥ,* 'very devoted to what they have heard as the truth'. And according to that hearing of the truth, they practise and thus with the help of others they are able to achieve spiritual development. Conquering death means conquering also birth, for without birth there is no death.

यावत्सञ्जायते किञ्चित्सत्त्वं स्थावरजङ्गमम्।
क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञसंयोगात्तद्विद्धि भरतर्षभ॥२६॥

Yāvatsañjāyate kiñcit sattvam sthāvarajaṅgamam;
Kṣetrakṣetrajña samyogāt tadviddhi bharatarṣabha — 13. 26

‘Whatever being is born, the moving or the unmoving, O bull of the Bhāratas, know it to be from the union of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña.*’

Yāvatsañjāyate, ‘whatever is born in this world’; *kiñcit sattvam,* ‘any entity’; *sthāvarajaṅgamam,* ‘anything moving or unmoving’; *sthāvara* is ‘unmoving’ and *jaṅgama* is ‘moving’; *kṣetrakṣetrajña samyogāt tadviddhi bharatarṣabha,* ‘remember, O Arjuna, that they are the products of the union of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña*’. This takes us back to the first verse of this chapter which began with *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña.* Then, Sāṅkhyan terminology, *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, was used. Now, Śrī Kṛṣṇa concludes by saying that this interaction between *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* is what brings about this multiplicity of beings in this world. Only one factor will not do; two factors are needed. *Prakṛti* is needed, and *Puruṣa* also is needed, because that is the power of intelligence. *Prakṛti* is absolutely dull dead matter. The need for *Puruṣa-Prakṛti samyoga* is a conclusion drawn here by Śrī Kṛṣṇa a few thousand years ago. Today, modern physical science, especially neurology and psychology, is engaged in understanding this subject. Can we explain all human phenomena based on one factor only, namely, *Prakṛti* or nature? For example, can we say that the brain explains everything? Or, the various genes in the genetic system explain everything? Those who are materialistic take that stand: ‘A little chemistry or physics of the body can explain all activities in the human system, even high class music or spiritual realization.’ But the truth is that mere dull dead matter cannot effect all this. There must be a principle of intelligence behind matter. Now, as I have referred to in the seventh chapter, neurologists like Sir Charles Sherrington, one of the greatest neurologists of the modern age who created modern neurology, and Wilder Penfield, the late scientist of the Montreal Neurological Institute, have affirmed the need for mind and brain. Both *kṣetra and kṣetrajña* are needed, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling here. Therefore, the discussions that had been carried on in the *Gītā* are being carried on now by the neurologists to understand truly the nature of life that we all experience here.

So, *yāvat sañjāyate kiñcit sattvam sthāvarajaṅgamam,* ‘anything that is born in this world, moving or unmoving’; *kṣetrakṣetrajña samyogāt tadviddhi,* ‘know that it is the product of the interaction between *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña*’. That means, matter as well as spirit or consciousness, both are

needed for explaining activities going on here. That is verse 26. Finally, we have a few more verses in this chapter, very high in spiritual message.

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम्।
विनश्यत्स्वविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति॥२७॥

Samam sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantam parameśvaram;
Vinaśyatsu avinaśyantam yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati — 13. 27

'He or she (really) sees, who sees the Supreme Lord existing equally in all beings, the imperishable in the perishable.'

Yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati, 'he or she who sees this truth, truly sees'. What is that truth? *Samam sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantam parameśvaram,* 'that *Parameśvara* or Supreme Being exists in all beings in its fullness'; *samam*, exists 'equally'; the Atman in its integral wholeness is present in each one of us; *sarveṣu bhūteṣu,* 'in all beings', including plants, animals, and everything; *tiṣṭhantam parameśvaram,* 'this *Parameśvara* is present'; *vinaśyatsu avinaśyantam,* 'that which is imperishable existing in perishable things.' These are all perishable, but what exists inside is imperishable. That never dies at all. That is the truth. *Yaḥ paśyati, sa paśyati,* 'those who know this truth, he or she has real knowledge'. That is the truth regarding the universe. That is the first verse in the series dealing with *samatā,* the attitude of equality; the same Atman in its fullness is present in all. What a beautiful conception! There is no fraction in the Atman. One may be literate, another illiterate, one may be poor, another rich, that doesn't matter. The Atman in him or her is perfectly the same. That is reflected in our political concept of democracy in which the integral value of every being is upheld, irrespective of other status elements that the person holds. That is Vedanta. Democracy and Vedanta have this in common. The Atman cannot be divided; the ballot paper in your hand cannot be divided. There is no half ballot paper or two ballot papers for anyone. It is one. Everyone has an integral value in democracy. That is the Vedantic teaching applied to the political situation.

This kind of expression has come in many places, in the fifth chapter for example. And it will come again in the eighteenth chapter—this Truth of

samatva and *samadarśitva.* This country has proclaimed *samatva* and *samadarśitva,* yet in practice we are far away from this truth; always seeing differences between one and another—low, lower, still lower, and high, higher, still higher—all these differences we have cultivated for centuries together. For the first time in the modern age, Swami Vivekananda said, we shall now put into practice this Vedantic teaching. We are developing a Vedantic culture, a Vedantic society in our country. The Atman is *equal*; what a beautiful conception! We had so much of inequality in India in spite of this great teaching. Our people read it and kept it aside. They will say, this is not meant for practice! Even the *paṇḍits* will tell you, 'keep it, but don't practise it; practise only untouchability, caste and all these things that differentiate. This is *samsāra;* the other is *paramārtha. Samsāra* will go on like this through differences'. But why not take *samsāra* nearer to *paramārtha?*, that question never came to their minds. Now we are asserting it. If it is truth, I *will* live it. I will not live in falsehood. This kind of new resolve is slowly coming to the whole nation. In a democracy there cannot be feudal distinctions. Feudal arrangements will be alright in a feudal society. Ours is not a feudal society. We are going to live according to democracy. It may take a few decades to achieve that full transformation because the whole national mind is so full of feudal ideas, ideas of high and low etc. I find many people talking on equality in public meetings; then they go home and secretly practise the same untouchability. Utter insincerity is evident. '*Our insincerity in India is awful*', is a sentence from Swami Vivekananda's lecture on *Vedanta* in Lahore in 1897 (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 3, p. 431). There you get how much he felt for this attitude of insincerity in India. Therefore, more and more of studying, thinking and meditation on these great ideas alone can transform the human situation. And that will be a tremendous national transformation. Never in history had we such a transformation before. In books we had; but not in human relations. So, remember that this modern age of Indian history, as Swami Vivekananda pointed out, is specially meant for this very purpose: to create a Vedantic society of freedom, equality, sacredness of the human personality. That has to be created in society by applying this Vedanta courageously. Young people must take to this great vision of human equality.

We may be ignorant, illiterate, but what does it matter? We are men and women. We have the same Self in all of us in its fullness. Atman is not one-fourth in me and three-fourths or one-and-a-half in you. Not at all. The same truth is there. Similarly, citizenship value is integral in each person; there is no one-and-a-half or two citizenship. So, what beautiful ideas are there in India to practise! If it is true, I must live it. That must be the tremendous resolve of every young person in India. Living a truthful life, and not a showy life—that is what many psychiatrists and psychoanalysts are complaining about the modern world. We tell our children, 'adjust to the world'. What is the meaning? A psychologist says it means, 'adjust a false self to a false world'. That is all what we have said so far. Why not say, 'adjust a true self to a true world'? We have not been taught that. Our parents will tell us to adjust to a wretched society full of inequality, full of injustice. Are there no people courageous enough to blast all these things? That should be the attitude today. Unless we have that revolutionary thinking, we won't be able to improve the situation.

Here are verses that contain that inspiration. By thinking deeply on it, we become a force for good. A better human relationship can be established in society. That will be a great day for India. What a change will come when all our educated people understand this truth and live it! That will be the biggest revolution that you can bring about not only in India but also in all parts of the world. But in India, we need this very much, because, in spite of this teaching, we have been most oppressed by inequality. Today, we have an opportunity to change it and create a very healthy society. We can bring about healthy inter-human relation. The *Gītā* gives you this kind of wisdom in the midst of its teaching on spiritual life which has tremendous consequences for our society. For a healthy society this is a great blessing. This book is not an ordinary book of instructions, of do's and don'ts. People ask for a code of conduct—Medical Code of Conduct, Police Inspector-General Code of Conduct, etc. What is the use of a Code of Conduct? Very few follow the code of conduct. It is not the code of conduct that we need. What is needed is the thinking power, the creative mind that asks 'how to make this life better and better'. It is not a mere change of behaviour, but a change of attitude at the back of that behaviour; that is what is needed.

In fact, the whole world is moving in that direction—to realize the equality between human beings, to see the One in many and feel our kinship with all. This vision is considered to be the highest according to Vedanta. The next *śloka* adds something more:

समं पश्यन्हि सर्वत्र समवस्थितमीश्वरम्।
न हिनस्त्यात्मनात्मानं ततो याति परां गतिम्॥२८॥

Samam paśyanhi sarvatra samavasthitam īśvaram;
Na hinasti ātmanātmānam tato yāti parām gatim — 13. 28

'Seeing the Lord equally present everywhere, he or she injures not the Self by the self, and so goes to the highest Goal.'

Samam paśyanhi sarvatra samavasthitam īśvaram, 'seeing that *Æśvara,* that Divine Lord, everywhere, who exists in all beings equally'; *samam paśyan,* 'developing that equality of vision' or *samatā darśan;* that is emphasized in many places in the *Gītā.* Such a person *na hinasti ātmanā ātmānam,* 'will not injure the Self by the self'. When you do not see the Atman in the other being, you may do immense harm to him or her, and also to yourself. That should not be. When you do not see the Atman in yourself, you are doing immense harm to yourself. You take your body—that which separates you from other persons—to be the Self. And so, you create a wall of separation between yourself and others. That is not proper. Whatever is the invariable element in all beings, that must be emphasized. That invariable element is the Atman, the divine spark in everyone of us. By this vision, we shall not injure the Self by the self. The Self in the other person is the Self in my being. He or she won't injure others thereby, but will realize oneness with them. *Tato yāti parām gatim,* 'thus he or she goes to the highest goal', the highest in human excellence by this realization. This vision is considered to be very high.

We evaluate people in terms of their externals. They are all variable, and therefore, we put emphasis on the differences; differences lead to conflicts; and everything gets distorted by that kind of a stress on differences. But when we don't deal with the variable—variables are there and we accept them, but we can see in and through the variable the invariable that is there

—then we are able to understand the correctness of seeing the unchanging in the midst of the changing. In a family there are several children and relatives; they are all different, but they see a genetic unity in all of them. They all belong to the same genetic family group; and how happy and friendly they are! They don't destroy each other. Keeping this attitude and extending it to the whole world, Vedanta says that it is the highest vision. *Samavasthitam* means 'equally present' in all beings. I referred to the political conception of citizenship equally present in all members of a political community. The language is the same; one is political and the other is spiritual. This finds expression in the social and political democratic life of people. This is what we need all over the world. The world unity comes from this spiritual vision. That is why the *Gītā* has developed these ideas in several chapters, including the fifth chapter, and now, in this thirteenth chapter.

प्रकृत्यैव च कर्माणि क्रियमाणानि सर्वशः।
यः पश्यति तथात्मानमकर्तारं स पश्यति॥२९॥

Prakṛtyaiva ca karmāṇi kriyamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ;
Yaḥ paśyati tathātmānam akartāram sa paśyati — 13. 29

'He or she truly sees, who sees that all actions are done by *Prakṛti* alone, and that the Self is actionless.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues: How does a man or woman, who truly sees the truth of things, view the various manifestations around him or her? *Prakṛtyaiva ca karmāṇi kriyamāṇāni,* 'all actions in this world are done by nature or *Prakṛti*', and not by the Self. *Sarvaśaḥ,* 'in every way', in every department it is nature that does the various functions, what we call in philosophical language, 'processes'. All the processes are *by* nature and *in* nature. The *Puruṣa* behind, the Self, doesn't act at all. But all these changes in one's life come from the changes *Prakṛti* makes everywhere. This is the Sāṅkhyan idea. *Tathātmānam akartāram yaḥ paśyati,* 'and he or she who sees that the Atman does not function at all', *saḥ paśyati*, 'he or she truly sees'. The Atman is just there, the one light of Consciousness. All changes take place in *Prakṛti.* And those who attribute it to oneself, are bound people. Those who are detached from it are free people. Therefore, this is

the truth: Nature functions, not the Self, not the soul. But through that function, a change comes in the *Puruṣa* because of attachment to the functions of *Prakṛti.* That has to be avoided by oneself by the spirit of detachment.

यदा भूतपृथग्भावमेकस्थमनुपश्यति।
तत एव च विस्तारं ब्रह्म सम्पद्यते तदा॥३०॥

Yadā bhūtapṛthagbhāvam ekastham anupaśyati;
Tata eva ca vistāram brahma sampadyate tadā — 13. 30

'When one sees the separate existence of all beings as inherent in the One, and their expansion from That (One) alone, he or she then becomes Brahman.'

This verse can be in any modern book on cosmology. When you realize that the entire multiplicity of beings in this world are all centred in the One, and come out from that One, then you have realized Brahman, for that One is Brahman. Everything has come from there. *Ekastham anupaśyati,* 'he or she sees that they are all centred in the One', that supreme pure Consciousness which is Brahman. What are they that are centred in the One?, *bhūtapṛthagbhāvam,* 'separate existence of beings' in the world—all of them, are centred in that One; *tata eva ca vistāram,* 'and from that One they expand' into this world of multiplicity. The same One has expanded and become this world of manifestation, of multiplicity and division. Millions of things are here. Are they all here by themselves?, no, they are all centred in the One, the Primordial One. The word for 'centred in the One' used here is *ekastham.* These are all separate, but they are all centred in the One. At the beginning of cosmic evolution, that One was there.

When he or she sees all this multiplicity of beings and entities in the world as *ekastham,* 'centred in the One', and *tata eva ca vistāram,* 'from that One the expansion having taken place'; *brahma sampadyate tadā,* 'then he or she realizes Brahman'. That is Brahman, of the nature of pure Consciousness. *Satyam jñānam anantam brahma.* Brahman is defined in *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* as (1) *Satyam,* 'truth'; what exists is truth. *Sat* means 'what exists', and *satyam* comes from that. (2) *Jñānam* means 'of the nature

of Consciousness'; not dull dead matter. That state of singularity. (3) And *anantam* means 'infinite'. So, this universe has come out of that One. When you realize this truth, you have realized Brahman. In the One we all exist; in the One we all expand; and when we contract back, we go to the same One. That is the permanent one, ever there. The whole universe is Brahman: *Brahmaivedam amṛtam,* 'this universe is nothing but that immortal Brahman' (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, II. ii. 11). That is the language used in the Upaniṣads.

अनादित्वान्निर्गुणत्वात्परमात्मायमव्ययः।
शरीरस्थोऽपि कौन्तेय न करोति न लिप्यते॥३१॥

Anāditvāt nirguṇatvāt paramātmā ayam avyayaḥ;
Śarīrastho'pi kaunteya na karoti na lipyate — 13. 31

'Being without beginning and devoid of *guṇas,* this Supreme Self, Immutable, O son of Kuntī, though existing in the body, neither acts nor is affected.'

Paramātmā ayam, 'this Paramātman or the Supreme Self'; *anāditvāt*, 'because of being beginningless'; whatever has a beginning will have an end. Brahman is beginningless. These multiple things in the world had a beginning. They have an end also. Brahman itself had no beginning. That is the main teaching. Even in astronomy you have to take it that the primordial background material has no beginning. Then *nirguṇatvāt*, 'because of being beyond all these *guṇas*'; multiplicity involves the manifestation of the *guṇas—sattva, rajas* and *tamas.* In that state there are no *guṇas*. Moreover, this Paramātman being *avyaya*, 'immutable'; *vyaya* means 'expenditure'; *avyaya* means you may spend any amount but still it remains the same. That is *avyaya*, 'without any diminution' in the truth that is there. Thus, this Brahman which is infinite and inexhaustible, *śarīrastho'pi*, 'even though it is in the body'; *na karoti na lipyate*, 'it doesn't do anything, nor is it tainted by anything'. That is the teaching: the Atman is never tainted. It is a very profound teaching in the *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads. Suppose someone commits a sin, that will not affect the Atman within; but it will affect the body, the sensory system, and the psyche. Beyond that it cannot go. That truth within is ever pure; the Self of even the worst sinner is untouched by

sin. This is the very important teaching in Vedanta. It is not tainted, it doesn't do anything, it is ever free. So, in the *Brahma-Sūtra* commentary Śaṅkarācārya wrote: *nitya śuddha buddha mukta svabhāva param ātman,* 'the Supreme Atman which is *nitya śuddha* or eternally pure, *nitya buddha,* or eternally awakened, and *nitya mukta,* or eternally free'. That is its nature. That 'imprisoned splendour' is within us; we have to release that splendour. The whole effort in religion is only to release that splendour. Even secular life is only meant to release that splendour. I was a helpless person subject to nature's pressures when I was a primitive man or woman. Then slowly I evolved into a civilized person. What has happened?, this splendour that is within has manifested a little. That has given me so much of power to develop myself. Then, as a civilized person, I take to religion—something wonderful. Then I find that I manifest more of that divine nature.

The next verse gives a simile:

यथा सर्वगतं सौक्ष्म्यादाकाशं नोपलिप्यते।
सर्वत्रावस्थितो देहे तथात्मा नोपलिप्यते॥३२॥

Yathā sarvagatam saukṣmyāt ākāśam nopalipyate;
Sarvatrāvasthito dehe tathātmā nopalipyate — 13. 32

'As the all-pervading *ākāśa* or space, because of its subtlety, is not tainted, so the Self existing everywhere in the body, is not tainted.'

This *ākāśa* or space is all-pervading. You cannot see any place or thing where space is not there. Even inside a piece of stone there is space. Imagine! With our eyes we cannot see space within a thick stone. But look at it from the point of view of nuclear physics: between one atom and another there is space. Within the atom itself there is tremendous space. The language of the modern scientist will be so stunning to us when he says: from the core of the atom where the protons are, upto the electron that is at the periphery, there is as much distance, relatively speaking, as between the earth and the sun. All that is space, empty space. What is this universe?, it is empty space. The amount of matter in the universe is so little; the rest is all empty space. And *within* the matter also there is empty space! That is the language physical science uses today.

Yathā, 'just as' this *ākāśa* or space which is *sarvagatam,* 'everywhere', and, *saukṣmyāt*, 'because of its being extremely subtle', *na upalipyate,* 'it is never tainted'. You cannot taint the *ākāśa.* Suppose there is a dirty smell in a room. It doesn't taint the *ākāśa* in the room. You just drive the stale air out and it becomes alright. So, the example of the *ākāśa* is taken. What else can be taken as an example for this wonderful infinite reality! So, all our literature takes space as an example. Space is everywhere, inside and outside of things, and it cannot be tainted. Brahman also is inside and outside everything; it cannot be tainted. The example of *ākāśa* is therefore taken.

Similarly, *saukṣmyāt,* 'because of the Atman being extremely subtle'; *sarvatrāvasthito dehe,* 'even though present all over the body'; *tathā ātmā na upalipyate,* 'the Atman is not tainted'. Though the Atman is within the body and everywhere else, it is not tainted thereby. That is the great focus of spiritual aspiration. There is something which is sacred, holy in nature in human experience; that is this infinite Atman. We call it God in the usual religious language. But unfortunately the word God usually means someone sitting in the sky—an extra-cosmic entity. If that reference is removed, this word 'God' can stay; it is a beautiful word. But you have to explain it as being not an item among items. God as an item in the world is not the nature of God in Vedanta. God is *the* all. Everything is only an expression of the divine. Everything has *come* from the divine, rests in the divine, and will go back to the divine. It is only pure Consciousness that can answer to that description. Ever clean, ever pure, no taint at all—that is the nature of the Atman. There is a focus like this in each one of us. That is the most inspiring message Vedanta gives to humanity. You may be the most wicked person, your psyche may be wicked, your sensory system may be wicked, but there is some focus in you free from all this wickedness; the core of your being is the Atman and that is never wicked. We can never taint it. That is why we can be redeemed by ourselves. Nobody need come to redeem us. Some help we can get from others. By manifesting that divine dimension we redeem ourselves. This is a very important point, that redemption can come through the grace of great spiritual manifestations like Divine incarnations. They can help us to unfold this divine within. Anybody can help us; even ordinary people can help us a little. But the

greatest help comes from the Divine incarnations. They can help to manifest the divine within. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's life is full of such examples: how he touched people to overcome their weaknesses and manifest their own divine nature. Jesus told that to the lady taken in adultery, 'Go and sin no more', and she became absolutely free. The word has power because it comes from the Divine itself. Everybody cannot have that power. Those who have manifested the Divine within can have that power. 'Go and sin no more'; it is a very dramatic, a very meaningful incident narrated in the *New Testament*. How many wicked and sinful people are there in society! Sinners see sin in others. Holy people never see the sin. So, this woman was taken in adultery; many priests came and complained against her to Jesus. Also, they wanted to kill her by stoning her. Jesus said, 'Wait! You want to throw stones at her and kill her?' That was one way of killing in those days —by throwing stones which some of the Muslim countries have adopted now. In the Bible, you will find many such ways of killing. And they wanted to stone her to death. Jesus said, 'I want any one of you who has not committed a sin to cast the first stone.' Everybody started looking this way and that. They could not be sure that they had not committed any sin. So, one by one the crowd melted away. And then, Jesus turned to the lady and said, 'Go and sin no more. Where have your accusers gone?' 'They have gone away, sir, without accusing.' 'I also do not accuse you. Go and live in peace.' That is a wonderful story. That word has the power. He has the power to make that person realize that infinite pure focus within, which was unknown till then. The Divine teacher, an incarnation of God, can do that. Ordinary religious teachers cannot do that. Even a saint may not be able to do this much: forgiving sin and making one realize the divine within. This is the idea behind a very profound teaching that, in all of us, whether we are wicked or virtuous, there is one focus which is never contaminated, while all the rest can be contaminated.

In the last seven verses of the third chapter of the *Gītā,* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, while dealing with the source of and remedy for crime, had said that the *indriyas, manas,* and *buddhi,* 'sense organs, mind and intellect', can be infected by evil, by sin, but not the Atman which is behind them. And so take recourse to that dimension of your personality and overcome these infections by realizing your own true nature.

Now comes another example in the next verse:

यथा प्रकाशयत्येकः कृत्स्नं लोकमिमं रविः।
क्षेत्रं क्षेत्री तथा कृत्स्नं प्रकाशयति भारत॥३३॥

Yathā prakāśayatyekaḥ kṛtsnam lokamimam raviḥ;
Kṣetram kṣetrī tathā kṛtsnam prakāśayati bhārata — 13. 33

'As the one sun illumines all this world, so does He who abides in the *kṣetra,* O descendent of Bharata, illumine the whole *kṣetra.*'

We started with *kṣetra,* 'the body', and the *kṣetrī,* 'the one who knows the body', in the beginning of this chapter. The knower of the body is *kṣetrajña,* one who knows the body. The body does not know itself. Something *else* knows the body. There is the subject, the self, the knower, the observer, apart from the body. That is how we started the chapter with the discrimination between the known and the knower. It was also said that the knower in one body is not different from the knower in another body. There is only one Knower in all the *kṣetras,* Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said. One infinite Self exists in all of us. The bodies are many, but the Self is one. But in you and me there is also a false self—the self conditioned by the body-mind complex, the genetically conditioned self. That makes me separate from you. I become your enemy, I may exploit you, I may kill you—all this because this self is caught up in the body-mind complex and cannot escape. But the real Self will only release love, concern, service, and dedication to the world outside.

This is the teaching. Here, in this verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling: *yathā raviḥ prakāśayati,* 'just as the sun illumines'; *ekaḥ,* 'alone'; the sun alone illumines the whole solar system. Nothing else illumines it. About 8000 million miles across is the spread of solar light; 4000 or so million miles will be the frontier of the solar system. The space vehicle, *Voyager,* is slowly going out of the solar system—a wonderful human achievement. If that is so, how much space is covered! Millions of miles; all illumined by one single sun! That is taken as the example here. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, just as this single sun illumines the entire world, meaning thereby the solar system, similarly, *kṣetram kṣetrī tathā kṛtsnam prakāśayati,* 'this *kṣetrī,* or the

Knower of the *kṣetra* or body, illuminates all *kṣetras* or bodies'; *bhārata,* 'O Arjuna!'. That is a wonderful last but one verse of this thirteenth chapter.

The stress on unity, the stress on equality is there again and again in the *Gītā: Ekam eva advitīyam,* 'it is one alone and non-dual'. There is no second. It is not monism; it is Advaita, non-dualism, non-separateness. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: all *kṣetras* or bodies everywhere are illumined by one *kṣetrī* or Self. What a beautiful conception! Things are many, beings are many, but everywhere there is a *kṣetrī* or *kṣetrajña*, and that is One in you, in me, and in all beings. That is the real vision. The One behind the many; the many is deluding us. But there is no plurality in the Light that is within. But the different configurations of the body-mind complex makes it appear as if there are many selves. Really speaking, there is only one infinite God of the nature of pure Consciousness; the Light of Consciousness lights up everything in this world. That is the language of the Upaniṣads: *tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti,* 'by Its Light the whole universe is lighted.' It is 'the Light of all lights', *jyotiṣām jyotiḥ.* In verse 17 of this chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses this expression. It is neither 'He' nor 'She'; we use the word *tat* which means 'That' or 'It'; *Om tat sat,* 'Om, That Supreme Truth'. That is how God is described in a brief utterance. That will come in the following chapters.

So, in this last but one verse, you get this idea that all the bodies are illumined by one single Self of the nature of pure Consciousness. But within the body when this Light gets caught up, it finds itself as separate, in a state of ignorance or delusion. Even though we are one with each other, we try to kill each other, to destroy each other, to fight with each other; all that we do because we do not know the truth. This is how *Gītā* presents this truth. Men and women have passed through so many types of exploitation. All concept of separation is due to delusion or ignorance. We are essentially one. And today, the whole world is going in that direction. Even politically and socially, the consciousness is expanding beyond one's own limitation and embracing others in the universe. This is the way of progress of humanity. *Vedanta gives you the philosophy behind this modern trend.* If the world is to be united, it will need a philosophy. You will get that philosophy in Vedanta, and in Swami Vivekananda's literature. Swami Vivekananda specially stresses this point in his lectures in the West: how we can bring

about unity in the modern age. Modern age is meant for that. We are already proceeding in that direction. But the philosophy you need for that is in Vedanta. Nowhere else will you get it. We can develop even a very secular philosophy. We don't make a distinction between secular and spiritual in Vedanta. They are only two departments of the same educational process. And so, in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (II. i. 10) it is mentioned: In this world of manifestation, there is no difference between one thing and another. There is no *nānātvam* 'differences'. This has to be inculcated into the people. People must receive this education, and it is slowly coming. How much separation we had before between one human being and another! We thought that one person in a village was entirely separate from another in another village. They belonged to two separate tribes. Now, millions of people can feel that they belong to each other. Still more developments of this idea will take place. There is that trend: evolution towards that harmony, that unity out of which will come world peace. That is what the world is seeking. And so Śrī Kṛṣṇa concludes this chapter with this last verse, verse 34:

क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोरेवमन्तरं ज्ञानचक्षुषा।
भूतप्रकृतिमोक्षं च ये विदुर्यान्ति ते परम्॥३४॥

Kṣetra kṣetrajñayoḥ evam antaram jñānacakṣuṣā;
Bhūtaprakṛtimokṣam ca ye viduḥ yānti te param — 13. 34

'They who, thus, with the eye of knowledge, perceive the distinction between the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajña,* and also the emancipation from the *Prakṛti* of beings, go to the Supreme.'

Thus have we propounded in this chapter *kṣetra kṣetrajñayoh evam antaram,* 'the distinction between *kṣetra* or body and the *kṣetrajña* or the knower of the body'. This has been given to you, *jñānacakṣuṣā,* 'through the eye of knowledge'. You cannot see this unity through the physical eye. You cannot see the character of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña*, and the unity of all *kṣetrajña* with the physical eye. You need the eye of knowledge. First, the distinction between *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña;* then the unity of all *kṣetrajña;* and, at a higher level, the unity of *kṣetra* and *Kṣetrajña.* This is how Vedanta takes us further and further, even to the unity of *kṣetra* and

Kṣetrajña; from One they both have come, and at one stage, they bifurcated as the observed and the observer, as object and subject.

The eye, for example, is meant to see. See what?, see an object. Eye is the seer, and that which is seen is the object. This distinction has come from the same nature. Nature's energies became the object on the one side, the subject and the sensory system, on the other. This duality is needed for continuing the world's evolution. But the truth is that, behind both, there is the higher nature i.e., pure Consciousness. This is how Vedanta deals with the subject. In normal life, we see an object; the object is separate, and I am separate. But, this separation vanishes at a higher level. This ordinary level will remain. You have to go beyond it step by step. That is real education: to remove separateness and to see things in the light of the One—many seen in the light of the One. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said here in verse 30:

Yadā bhūtapṛthagbhāvam ekastham anupaśyati;
Tata eva ca vistāram brahma sampadyate tadā —

'All these various beings and entities are seen centred in that One. And from the One they have all expanded and become what they are today'. This is the knowledge which we have to achieve and that knowledge is called the knowledge of Brahman, the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality. So, in the last verse it is said, see the distinction between *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña.* We see only the *kṣetra.* We are not able to see the *kṣetrajña,* the knower of the *kṣetra.* We are busy with the *kṣetra*—my body and all the bodies and objects in the world. What about the *kṣetrajña?* First separate it and see it as the enlightening aspect of the whole *kṣetra. Kṣetra* is lit by the *kṣetrajña.* The eye has no light of its own. It is Consciousness that makes the eye see. Similarly, the ears hear. All these are possible because of that one Consciousness which is *kṣetrajña.*

So, first you see the distinction: I am not the body, I am the *kṣetrajña* or the knower of the body. This body is only an object. That is the first knowledge we get. Then *jñānacakṣuṣā,* 'through the eye of knowledge', different from the physical eye, you get access to greater truths. The physical eye can see objects, but it cannot see the final truth and reality. So, you need the eye of knowledge or *jñānacakṣu.* A scientist, for example, develops *jñānacakṣu* while investigating physical nature. Things are *not*

what they seem, what they *appear* to the senses. They are quite different and that knowledge comes only through *jñānacakṣu.* The earth is flat in whichever direction we look. But the *jñānacakṣu* says it is round. What a great change it is! The senses cannot reveal that truth.

And so, through *jñānacakṣu,* you first see the distinction between the body and the Self, between *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña.* And then comes ultimate 'liberation from nature and its products', *bhūta prakṛti mokṣa.* We have to get freedom from that physical nature which has held us enthralled for these millions of years. An animal is enthralled by nature. We are also slaves of nature. We have to be freed from nature. From the Sāṅkhyan point of view, we are under the control of nature, and then we slowly liberate ourselves. But nature also says, nature is liberating itself from the *Puruṣa.* Till now, it was playing with the *Puruṣa* and making *Puruṣa* dance according to its tune. Now nature separates, leaving *Puruṣa* to its own. So, from one point of view, it means also nature's liberation. But spiritually speaking, it is the liberation of the One who is ever free, caught up as it were in the coils of *Prakṛti* and behaving as if bound. That kind of un-freedom is overcome. Then the human being realizes one's own inherent freedom, inherent illumination. That is *bhūtaprakṛtimokṣam.* 'Those who know this truth', *ye viduḥ*, viz the distinction between the Self and the non-Self, and the conditioning of the Self by lower *Prakṛti*; *te yānti param*, 'they go to the highest state of existence,' i.e., absolute emancipation or freedom, when they know this truth. All our culture is essentially an effort to make us grow in this direction. Sometimes we become stagnant at a particular level; and then we do not progress at all. We become uncreative and so we get caught up in the trap of nature. That feeling, 'there is no way to escape', comes. But spirituality says, 'no, you can break through all these bondages.'

Sri Ramakrishna speaks of a fisherman casting his net in the lake. Some fish are very clever; they will avoid that net. But many are not so clever and are thus caught in the net. So, we have two types: first, not getting into the net at all being very clever. These are called *nityamuktas,* 'ever free'; no net can catch them. To the next type belong the many who are caught; they are called *baddhas,* 'the bound'. Among those that are bound, some struggle and are able to jump out of the net. They are called the *muktas* or 'the freed ones'. But quite a few of them do not even know that they are caught in the

net. They are quite happy there. They bite the net and quietly live there. That is another type of human beings, the *baddhas,* 'the bound souls'. So, Sri Ramakrishna says four types of human beings are there, *baddha, mumukṣu, mukta* and *nityamukta*. One is the bound one; quite happy to be bound. He or she is *baddha* and does not know that after some time he or she will be hauled up and destroyed. That far-sight is not there. But some are struggling. They are not happy with this bondage to nature. They are called *mumukṣu,* the struggling persons who desire to be free. Then, *mukta,* those who escape from this kind of bondage and become free. And the fourth is the *nityamukta,* the ever free; no bondage can ever bind them. *Māyā* cannot take them in its net.

In the life of Sri Ramakrishna we find two characters. One is Narendra, the later Swami Vivekananda, whom Sri Ramakrishna used to call *nityamukta, nityasiddha,* ever free, ever perfect. *Māyā* could not catch Swami Vivekananda. The other was Durga Charan Nag, a householder devotee, a doctor, and a wonderful person. Regarding them, the great dramatist Girish Chandra Ghosh remarked one day: The Divine Mother threw Her net of *Māyā* to catch all souls. She could catch all of them except two, Narendra and Durga Charan Nag. How did they escape? Narendra became so big through *jñāna,* that the net could not contain him. So, he was out of the net. Durga Charan Nag became so humble in his *bhakti* and spirituality, that he could escape through the interstices of the net. These are the two ways: *jñāna* and *bhakti.* The *jñāni* says, 'I am the infinite One', and so no net can catch him or her. But, the *bhakta* says, 'I am nobody. God is everything.' So, he or she passes through the interstices of the net. *Māyā* cannot catch such people.

This is how in this verse it is said, those who know this truth they become free; *yānti te param,* 'they attain the supreme state'. So, the whole chapter is ended with this statement, that we can struggle and be free, that we can understand the truth of things, that we can remove all separateness and see the One in the many, the One from which the many has come, the One towards which the many finally go and enter into. Then we can be free. 'Thou shalt know the truth and the truth shall make you free,' Jesus said giving the same idea. That is the importance of this wonderful chapter. You find more of philosophy, more of subtle ideas, in this chapter.

The remaining chapters are elaboration of these ideas, particularly more and more about the three *guṇas—sattva, rajas* and *tamas*. They are very important concepts in Sāṅkhya and Vedanta. In all our religious studies these are very helpful in dealing with oneself and in dealing with others. That subject will begin when we enter the next chapter, the fourteenth, where Śrī Kṛṣṇa begins the discourse without waiting for Arjuna's question.

इति क्षेत्र क्षेत्रज्ञ विभाग योगो नाम त्रयोदशोऽध्यायः ।

Iti Kṣetra kṣetrajña vibhāga yogo nāma trayodaśo'dhyāyaḥ —

'Thus ends the thirteenth chapter, designated *The Discrimination of the kṣetra and the kṣetrajña.'*

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 14

Guîatraya-Vibhága-Yoga
The Discrimination of the Three *Guîas*

Today we enter the fourteenth chapter of the *Gītā.* It deals with the three *guṇas—sattva, rajas* and *tamas*—a very important subject in Sāṅkhya, Vedanta, and all the religions in India. And our country is passing through a big transformation in the light of the *guṇas.* It was mostly *tamas* for centuries. Now *tamas* has changed to *rajas.* That is progress.

In the last week we had our general elections and the process of lobbying the largest number of voters—an unimaginable number of five hundred million—was conducted almost peacefully and constructively. Wherever there was trouble, there was also re-polling. And the whole country is expecting the results. When you deal with the *guṇas,* you will find its application to individual and collective life. The next stage of human development in India is *sattva*—from *rajas* to *sattva,* through education, through ethical and moral values. The nation can capture, has to capture a bit of *sattva* to control and direct its *rajas.* That is human development in the right direction, towards true freedom of the human spirit, true happiness and welfare of humanity. So, this chapter is of great interest in dealing with one's own life and in dealing with the life of the community at large. The fourteenth chapter is called, *Guṇa-traya-vibhāga,* 'division of nature into the three *guṇas*'. The whole of nature is constituted out of three *guṇas.* We shall see in the text itself how these *guṇas* operate in life, both in the cosmos outside and in the human being as an individual.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues the discourse of the thirteenth chapter into the fourteenth chapter without any question being asked by Arjuna. But, towards the end of the fourteenth chapter, Arjuna gets an opportunity and he asks a question and Śrī Kṛṣṇa replies to it. That is how the chapter ends. Here the chapter begins:

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'Śrī Bhagavān said:'

परं भूयः प्रवक्ष्यामि ज्ञानानां ज्ञानमुत्तमम्।
यज्ज्ञात्वा मुनयः सर्वे परां सिद्धिमितो गताः॥१॥

Param bhūyaḥ pravakṣyāmi jñānānām jñānam uttamam;
Yajjñātvā munayaḥ sarve parām siddhimito gatāḥ —14. 1

'Again I shall tell you that supreme Knowledge which is above all knowledge, having known which all the *munis* have attained to high perfection after this life.'

Bhūyaḥ pravakṣyāmi, 'again I shall speak to you'; *jñānānām uttamam param jñānam,* 'the best *Jnāna* among *jñānas*'. *Jñāna* belongs to various categories and here he says, I am going to tell you of the Knowledge among all knowledge i.e., *uttamam param jñānam*. *Yat jñātvā munayaḥ sarve,* 'knowing which all ancient sages'; *parām siddhim ito gatāḥ,* 'attained *parām siddhim* or "supreme perfection" from this world of relativity and finitude', by realizing this *Jñāna* of all *jñānas.* So, it is highly praised thereby. We understand things, and we can manipulate the world in such a way that we become free. Till now the world was manipulating us. All subhuman species are manipulated by nature. Much of human life also is manipulated by nature. We are like a plaything in the hands of nature. But we can take away our life from the hands of nature and begin to develop ourselves. To do that we need knowledge. How to go beyond the three *guṇas* and become free? That is our own privilege. No animal can do it. And so, this subject eventually takes us to that state which is beyond all the three *guṇas.* Thus, a new concept comes here, the concept of *triguṇātīta. Atīta* means 'transcendent', beyond *triguṇa,* 'the three *guṇas*'. Many sages have achieved this and become free. We shall also achieve it and become free. That is why the knowledge of the three *guṇas* is very important in our life.

Ito gatāḥ, 'in this human life they have attained' to high perfection; *ito* means 'in this human life', this relativity here. The ancient sages have

transcended this by understanding the nature of the *guṇas* and by trying to get rid of the influence of the *guṇas* on oneself, by making the *guṇas* the servants and not the master of human life.

इदं ज्ञानमुपाश्रित्य मम साधर्म्यमागताः।
सर्गेऽपि नोपजायन्ते प्रलये न व्यथन्ति च॥१४.२॥

Idam jñānam upāśritya mama sādharmyam āgatāḥ;
Sarge'pi nopajāyante pralaye na vyathanti ca — 14. 2

'They who, having devoted themselves to this knowledge, have attained to My Being, are neither born at the time of creation, nor are they troubled at the time of dissolution.'

Idam jñānam upāśritya, 'depending upon this knowledge'; *upāśritya* means 'depending on', *idam jñānam,* 'this knowledge'; *mama sādharmyam āgatāḥ,* 'they have become one with Me'; and such people, *sarge'pi na upajāyante,* 'are not born at the time of creation', because they are free; and, *pralaye na vyathanti ca,* 'they do not feel sorry when the whole world is dissolved'. That is the nature of that freedom. What a wonderful state of mind it is! You are being sent out into the world through that evolutionary process, but this particular person doesn't come under that category; he or she is free. He or she has gone beyond the three *guṇas.* Similarly, when the world is going to be wound up at the final stage, he or she is not worried about it. So, when we understand our own true nature as one with Brahman, the play of nature does not worry us. We merely look on and watch the play. That is why this idea was emphasized earlier. There is a 'Looker-on' in ourselves watching everything like a witness; the other one is caught up in the play of nature. The former is our true dimension. We are not essentially subjected to nature. We have all the power in us to go beyond this nature. We have in ourselves a divine nature, but we do not know it. So, we become instruments in the hands of external nature. But, such people who have really gone beyond this nature, i.e., the three *guṇas,* are not worried when the world is being dissolved; they are not worried because they are not going to be brought back again into the world at the time of creation; they are free. 'They are free', that is the language.

मम योनिर्महद्ब्रह्म तस्मिन् गर्भं दधाम्यहम्।
सम्भवः सर्वभूतानां ततो भवति भारत॥३॥

Mama yoniḥ mahad brahma tasmin garbham dadhāmyaham;
Sambhavaḥ sarvabhūtānām tato bhavati bhārata — 14. 3

'My womb is the great *Prakṛti;* in that I place the germ; from thence, O descendant of Bharata, is the birth of all beings.'

There is nature, and there is the divine Lord. Ultimately, the whole of nature is only a part of the divine Lord Himself. In Sāṅkhya philosophy these are the two entities: nature or *Prakṛti* on the one side and *Puruṣa* on the other. *Puruṣa* means the Man, the Soul, and He is multiple. Infinite *Puruṣas* are there. But *Prakṛti* is one. And *Prakṛti* catches hold of this *Puruṣa* or the human being through this network of relativity constituted of the three *guṇas,* and the human being is caught! He or she becomes bound. Then after sometime, he or she understands the truth, detaches oneself from it and becomes free. That is the Sāṅkhya way of putting it. Just as the Sāṅkhyas unified the whole of nature or *Prakṛti*, Vedanta unified the multiplicity of *Puruṣas*, and also unified nature and the *Puruṣas* in one infinite Brahman. Complete unification was achieved in the great philosophy of Advaita of the Upaniṣads—One and not two. There is only one single Reality out of which everything has come, and into which everything will return at the end. In that process, you get *Prakṛti* as a separate entity but coming from the *Puruṣa* itself. Therefore, there is no duality here. But once *Prakṛti* starts functioning, duality comes, and delusion comes. We mix up everything and we are asked to get free from that delusion. That is the purpose of spiritual life and philosophy based on spirituality which is a task before us. Be free, be free. The word is always, 'freedom'. How to be free? How to be free? Something is checking me, something is making me hamstrung as it were. How to become free from this? The greatest urge in the heart of human beings is freedom and how to achieve it.

Yesterday a devotee from Berlin, with whom I stay when I go there, sent a German and an English newspaper published from Berlin, only to inform me how people of Communist East Germany are crossing over to West

Germany. The dividing wall is broken and there is tremendous joy and enthusiasm in the people who get to West Germany. They feel that freedom which they did not feel earlier. You can see in this instance that the biggest value is freedom. The picture of thousands of men, women and children crossing over to West Germany has appeared in the *Hindu* today in its supplement. A huge crowd of people coming over, but why?, because of the feeling that 'I am free, I am free'; 'I am not manipulated by some external pressure.' That is what a human soul seeks. Even the animal seeks freedom. Everybody seeks freedom. So, we ourselves have to achieve this freedom from *Prakṛti* or nature. We have got our own higher nature within us, a divine nature. Nature outside is of one type, and nature within is of another type. Both are nature, and both together constitute the totality of reality. An earlier chapter called these as, *aparā prakṛti* and *parā prakṛti.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said in the seventh chapter (verses 4 to 6) that 'this cosmos, this nature, is My lower *Prakṛti.* In men and women there is a spark of divinity and that is My higher *Prakṛti.* Between these two, I am the real Cause and the real Support of the whole universe'. Upon these verses Śaṅkarācārya comments: *prakṛti dvaya dvāreṇa aham sarvajñaḥ īśvaraḥ jagataḥ kāraṇam,* 'through these twofold *Prakṛtis*, I, the Omniscient Lord, am the cause of the whole universe.' That is the unity that comes in Advaita Vedanta. Nature and spirit are both absorbed in one supreme Spirit, namely, Brahman of the nature of pure Consciousness.

Mama yoniḥ mahad brahma, 'My womb is this *Prakṛti* which is called *mahat brahma* or big Brahmā' and that Brahmā has to be activated to produce this universe. *Tasmin garbham dadhāmyaham,* 'I impregnate it' for evolution of the living universe. I am the cause of making for that activation of *Prakṛti.* A parallel idea is found in today's genetics that new lives come from the joining of one element with another. Through these two—these twofold *Prakṛti*—the whole universe comes into being. So, 'I' am the one who is to activate that *Prakṛti* to start this kind of genetic process. New generations come out this way. Here *Prakṛti* is separated from Me and that *Prakṛti* becomes the Mother of the whole creation. For that *Prakṛti,* we use the word Divine Mother and that is a wonderful concept. The idea of *Śakti, Parāśakti, Ádiśakti;* that is the Feminine Principle. Behind this universe there is this Feminine Principle. Many poets and writers have referred to it.

Goethe, that famous German dramatist, ends his famous book, *The Faust,* with this sentence: 'The Eternal Feminine leads us on and on'. That is a wonderful statement. There is an eternal Feminine, and that is what we call *Prakṛti* in our language— *Mahāprakṛti* or Divine Mother of the universe; and here is the Father. The Father-Mother idea is taken from the life of normal living mammals to the highest level of creation itself. *Sambhavaḥ sarvabhūtānām tato bhavati bhārata,* 'O Arjuna, all beings are born out of this combination'. Two principles are there: Brahman and *Prakṛti, Śiva* and *Śakti.* These two are needed and out of these the whole universe comes— but essentially Brahman and *Prakṛti* are one. As Sri Ramakrishna said, Brahman and *Śakti* are non-different. For the purpose of getting this universe into being, there is the division between the two. But they are essentially one. One is the power of the other. *Śakti* means 'power'. Brahman's real power is seen in *Śakti,* and together they constitute the origin, sustenance, and dissolution of the whole universe.

सर्वयोनिषु कौन्तेय मूर्तय: सम्भवन्ति या:।
तासां ब्रह्म महद्योनिरहं बीजप्रद: पिता॥४॥

Sarvayoniṣu kaunteya mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ;
Tāsām brahma mahadyoniḥ aham bījapradaḥ pitā — 14. 4

'Whatever forms are produced, O son of Kuntī, in all the wombs, the great *Prakṛti* is their womb, and I am the seed-giving Father.'

Kaunteya, 'O Arjuna'; *sarvayoniṣu mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ,* 'whatever forms are produced in this universe out of the various causes in the world'; *tāsām,* 'among all of them'; *brahma mahadyoniḥ,* 'the great Brahmā or nature which is the female principle is the womb'; *aham bījapradaḥ pitā,* 'and I am the masculine principle, the giver of the seed'. Through these two, the whole universe comes into being. This is the human way of putting the whole cosmic process of evolution and development. Now comes the subject of the *guṇas.*

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणा: प्रकृतिसम्भवा:।
निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम्॥५॥

Sattvam rajastama iti guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ;
Nibadhnanti mahābāho dehe dehinam avyayam — 14. 5

'O mighty armed one, the *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—born of *Prakṛti*, bind the immutable embodied being to the body.'

Three *guṇas* are there which are, *prakṛtisambhavāḥ,* 'born of *Prakṛti*'. *Prakṛti* is constituted of the three *guṇas,* and these *guṇas* are said to be 'born out of *Prakṛti*'. What are they?, *sattva, rajas* and *tamas.* The whole of *Prakṛti* is an integration of *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* constituents. This is there in the whole universe. But when you come to the human being, these three, *nibadhnanti mahābāho dehe dehinam avyayam,* in some form or the other 'keeps this human being controlled and in bondage'. Man and woman are put in bondage by these three forces of *Prakṛti. Nibadhnanti* means 'puts into bondage'; *dehe* 'in the body'; *dehinam* 'the Self within the body' which is actually *avyayam,* 'the indestructible one'. The *dehi* or the embodied one, the Self within men and women, is indestructible, imperishable. Caught up in the body, he or she becomes limited and forgets one's own real nature; *guṇas* start acting on him or her. The way in which they will act will be described later on. But what happens to the human being is this: his or her essential nature is forgotten due to the influence of *Prakṛti* with its three constituents—*sattva, rajas,* and *tamas.*

तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात्प्रकाशकमनामयम्।
सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति ज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ॥६॥

Tatra sattvam nirmalatvāt prakāśakam anāmayam;
Sukhasaṅgena badhnāti jñānasaṅgena cānagha — 14. 6

'Of these, O sinless one, *Sattva*, because of being pure, is luminous and harmless; it binds by attachment to happiness and by attachment to knowledge.'

Let us deal with *sattva.* How does it act on this human being? *Nirmalatvāt,* 'because it is pure'; *sattva* is pure, transparent; *prakāśakam,* 'it is also luminous'; *anāmayam,* and 'stainless'. That is the *sattva* element: pure, stainless and luminous. *Sukhasaṅgena badhnāti,* 'it binds the human being through attachment to happiness'. Whenever serenity is there,

whenever 'he or she is happy or joyful', *sattva* is there. And that also binds him or her. It is also a cause of bondage. It binds because of attachment to *sukha* or happiness. Further *jñānasaṅgena ca anagha,* 'it also binds through *jñānasaṅga* or attachment to knowledge, O stainless one, i.e. Arjuna'. *Sattva* operates through attachment to happiness and attachment to knowledge. The human being is thus bound by *sattva.* It is a bondage, but it is not as bad as the other bondage that comes from *rajas* and *tamas.* All the *guṇas* are bondage for the Soul; beyond the *guṇas* is one's real nature. That is what we come across at the end of this chapter: the nature of the *guṇātīta*, 'of one who has gone beyond the *guṇas*'. How does such a one behave or live? That is the question Arjuna will ask later on.

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि तृष्णासङ्गसमुद्भवम्।
तन्निबध्नाति कौन्तेय कर्मसङ्गेन देहिनम्॥७॥

Rajo rāgātmakam viddhi tṛṣṇā saṅga samudbhavam;
Tannibadhnāti kaunteya karmasaṅgena dehinam — 14. 7

'Know *Rajas* to be of the nature of passion, giving rise to thirst and attachment; it binds fast, O son of Kuntī, the embodied one, by attachment to action.'

Viddhi kaunteya, 'understand O Arjuna', *rajas* is *rāgātmakam*, 'of the nature of passion'. Wherever there is *rāga* or 'passion', *tṛṣṇā* or 'craving' and *saṅga* or 'attachment' also will be there. '*Rajas* gives birth', *samudbhavam,* to both *tṛṣṇā* and *saṅga*, 'thirst and attachment'. *Tṛṣṇā* is thirst, desire, craving. In Buddha's teaching this *tṛṣṇā* is the basis of all *samsāra* or life, relativity or bondage. We should go beyond *tṛṣṇā;* that is the state where we shall be free. We shall then not at all be controlled by external nature. And this *rajas*, *nibadhnāti dehinam*, 'makes for the bondage of the human being'*; kaunteya*, 'O son of Kuntī'; *karmasaṅgena,* 'through attachment to action'. Where there is thirst or desire, there is also that tendency to express that thirst. That is called action. So, we go on acting based upon that thirst. Then you can see that *rajas* is dominating in the individual. The one dwelling in the body, *dehī,* gets caught up 'through attachment to action', *karmasaṅgena.*

तमस्त्वज्ञानजं विद्धि मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम्।
प्रमादालस्यनिद्राभिस्तन्निबध्नाति भारत॥८॥

Tamastu ajñānajam viddhi mohanam sarvadehinām;
Pramāda ālasya nidrābhiḥ tannibadhnāti bhārata — 14. 8

'And know *Tamas* to be born of ignorance, stupefying all embodied beings; it binds fast, O descendant of Bharata, by miscomprehension, indolence, and sleep.'

Tamas is born of *ajñāna* or ignorance; *mohanam sarvadehinām,* and 'it is a type of delusion for all embodied beings'. Wherever you find delusion, you find a predominance of *tamas* there. To be deluded is one big evil in human life. *Pramāda ālasya nidrābhiḥ*, 'through three particular moods of a human being: *pramāda* or "want of attention or alertness", *ālasya* or "that sense of tiredness", and *nidrā* or "sleep"'; *tat nibadhnāti,* 'it binds'; *bhārata*, 'O Arjuna'. When you are in *tamas,* you lose all attention or alertness. To be attentive is very important for human life. But that is not possible when *tamas* predominates. Secondly, you feel a sense of tiredness. When one is tired, you can see the presence of *tamas* at that time. Then, *nidrā* or 'sleep'. Most of the time one remains sleeping with no interest for work. That is the way of *tamas.* So, inattention, a sense of tiredness, and sleep come through this *tamas* element. All embodied beings are subject to this delusive power of *tamas.* That puts bondage on the human being through these various means.

Sattva, rajas and *tamas* all produce bondage, though there can be a better and a still better gradation in the experience of the bondage of these three types. The lowest is *tamas* and the highest is *sattva.*

सत्त्वं सुखे सञ्जयति रजः कर्मणि भारत।
ज्ञानमावृत्य तु तमः प्रमादे सञ्जयत्युत॥९॥

Sattvam sukhe sañjayati rajaḥ karmaṇi bhārata;
Jñānamāvṛtya tu tamaḥ pramāde sañjayatyuta — 14. 9

'*Sattva* makes for attachment to happiness, and *Rajas* to action, O descendant of Bharata; while *Tamas,* verily shrouding discrimination,

attaches to miscomprehension.'

'*Sattva* finds itself expressed in happiness', *sattvam sukhe sañjayati*. When you are happy, *sattva* is predominating in you; that means, whenever *sattva* predominates, happiness is there. You can see happiness in the mind as the result. *Rajaḥ karmaṇi bhārata*, and '*rajas* makes for attachment to action'. When *rajas* predominates, then you have the urge, 'I must do something'. A restless mind is the result. That is how *rajas* works in the human system. *Jñānamāvṛtya tu tamaḥ pramāde sañjayatyuta*, '*tamas* envelopes *jñāna* or knowledge in the human being, so that there is absolutely no clarity of vision; there is only miscomprehension.' A delusive attitude comes out of that ignorance. Here *tamas* is operating in the person. How many times do we do wrong things! When we are deluded under the condition of *tamas* operating within us, we ourselves can watch it: 'now *tamas* is predominant. I must be careful.' This knowledge is needed to help oneself and to help others as well. Seeing things wrongly comes from the delusive state of mind. When we say, 'I feel confused. I do not know what to do,' *tamas* is predominant.

One or the other of these three *guṇas* come in to dominance. There is no separate *sattva,* separate *rajas,* or separate *tamas.* They are all mixed up in nature and mixed up in us also. But sometimes, *sattva* predominates; sometimes, *rajas* predominates; and sometimes, *tamas* predominates. There is no separateness, but predominance can be there. So Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

रजस्तमश्चाभिभूय सत्त्वं भवति भारत।
रजः सत्त्वं तमश्चैव तमः सत्त्वं रजस्तथा॥१०॥

Rajastamaśca abhibhūya sattvam bhavati bhārata;
Rajaḥ sattvam tamaścaiva tamaḥ sattvam rajastathā—14. 10

'*Sattva* arises, O descendant of Bharata by predominating *Rajas* and *Tamas;* likewise, *Rajas* arises by predominating *Sattva* and *Tamas;* and so does *Tamas* arise predominating *Sattva* and *Rajas.*'

Sattva arises, O descendant of Bharata, predominating over *Rajas* and *Tamas*—that is called *sattva*-predominant. The other two—*rajas* and *tamas* —are there, but they are not very active. So, *sattva* manifests like this.

Rajas manifests by dominating *sattva* and *tamas.* Similarly, *tamas* manifests by dominating *rajas* and *sattva.* These predominance of one *guṇa* over the other two occurs under certain situations. These are the states through which we pass every day. A little knowledge of this may help us to improve ourselves without going to ask help from a psychologist or a psychiatrist. Very often we can help ourselves by knowing the situation we are in. 'Yes, that enemy has come and I must be careful.' That *alertness* will come to the human being and he or she can become one's own master in developing character.

सर्वद्वारेषु देहेऽस्मिन्प्रकाश उपजायते।
ज्ञानं यदा तदा विद्याद्विवृद्धं सत्त्वमित्युत॥११॥

Sarvadvāreṣu dehe'smin prakāśa upajāyate;
Jñānam yadā tadā vidyāt vivṛddham sattvamityuta—14. 11

'When through every sense organ in this body, the light of intelligence shines, then it should be known that *Sattva* is predominant.'

Yadā, 'when'; *asmin dehe*, you experience 'in this human body', Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *sarvadvāreṣu,* 'through its every opening'; *prakāśa upajāyate,* 'that state of light, luminosity'; it means that all the senses are tranquil and in a peaceful state. And this luminosity comes only from *jñānam,* 'knowledge'; *tadā,* 'then'; *vidyāt,* 'please know'; *vivṛddham satvamityuta,* '*sattva* has certainly become predominant.' When this kind of tranquillity, a sense of luminosity within comes, which is due to the presence of *jñāna,* at that time you can be sure that the *sattva* element is predominating.

लोभः प्रवृत्तिरारम्भः कर्मणामशमः स्पृहा।
रजस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे भरतर्षभ॥१२॥

Lobhaḥ pravṛttiḥ ārambhaḥ karmaṇām aśamaḥ spṛhā;
Rajasyetāni jāyante vivṛddhe bharatarṣabha — 14. 12

'Greed, activity, the undertaking of actions, unrest, longing—these arise when *Rajas* is predominant, O bull of the Bhāratas.'

Lobhaḥ, ‘greed’; *pravṛttiḥ,* ‘activity’; *karmaṇām ārambhaḥ,* ‘constantly planning new actions’; *aśamaḥ,* ‘unrest’; *spṛhā,* ‘longing’. At that stage you can see that all these things are done ‘because of *rajas* predominating at that time’. *Rajasi etāni jāyante vivṛddhe bharatarṣabha,* ‘when *rajas* becomes predominant O bull among the Bharatas, then all these activities and attitudes will come to a human being.’ *Lobhaḥ,* ‘greed’: I want this and I want that, I want more and more—all that is indicative of that state. *Aśamaḥ* means ‘without control’, without discipline; you don’t get rid of *karma,* you only keep adding more *karma;* you go on working impelled by some force within you. You are not doing work yourself with freedom; some force is impelling you. *Spṛhā* means ‘desire’. *Rajasi etāni jāyante,* ‘these are present in the human being when *rajas* becomes predominant’.

अप्रकाशोऽप्रवृत्तिश्च प्रमादो मोह एव च।
तमस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे कुरुनन्दन॥१३॥

Aprakāśaḥ apravṛttiśca pramādo moha eva ca;
Tamasyetāni jāyante vivṛddhe kurunandana — 14. 13

‘Darkness, inertness, miscomprehension, and delusion—these arise when *Tamas* is predominant, O descendant of the Kurus.’

Whenever darkness, inertness, miscomprehension, and delusion are active in a person, know for certain that *tamas* is predominating at that time. *Aprakāśaḥ,* ‘absence of light’; there is no light in that person; the mind is totally cloudy. *Apravṛttiḥ ca,* ‘with no desire to act’; let me just lie down for sometime—that kind of attitude; that is called *apravṛttiḥ,* ‘no impulse to action’. *Pramādo,* ‘miscomprehension’; and *moha,* ‘delusion’. Then, *tamasi etāni jāyante vivṛddhe,* ‘when *tamas* is predominant, these characteristics will appear in human beings’; you can watch for these and know the predominance of *tamas.* You can then say, ‘this is *tamas* now; I know what is going on’. It is good to know that I am doing something wrong, and that is the way to get rid of it also. So, in this way, knowledge is very elevating. In the fourth chapter, verse 38, Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said: *na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitram iha vidyate,* ‘there is nothing so purifying in life as knowledge’. *Jñāna* is a supremely purifying principle. Water can purify the body, but the mind can be purified only by knowledge. So, here is knowledge that will

help us to handle our own lives and the lives of those who are given to our care. We can guide properly even children. You can know that they are in this or that condition, with predominance of this or that *guṇa.* That knowledge is good; you can then handle yourself and others with that knowledge.

यदा सत्त्वे प्रवृद्धे तु प्रलयं याति देहभृत्।
तदोत्तमविदां लोकानमलान्प्रतिपद्यते॥१४॥

Yadā sattve pravṛddhe tu pralayam yāti dehabhṛt;
Tadā uttamavidām lokān amalān pratipadyate — 14. 14

'If the embodied one meets death when *Sattva* is predominant, then he or she attains to the spotless regions of those who are the worshippers of the Highest.'

If, *dehabhṛt,* 'the person who owns this body'; *pralayam yāti,* 'dies'; *yadā sattve pravṛddhe,* 'when the *sattva* element is predominant'; *tadā,* 'then'; *amalān uttamavidām lokān pratipadyate,* 'he or she reaches high worlds which are pure and attained by the knowers of the highest entities'. *Amalān,* 'spotless, pure'; *uttamavidām lokān* means 'worlds in which great, knowing persons have already gone'. You get such high worlds as a result of that *sattva. Pratipadyate,* the *sattva* state 'takes you to the high levels of future existence'.

रजसि प्रलयं गत्वा कर्मसङ्गिषु जायते।
तथा प्रलीनस्तमसि मूढयोनिषु जायते॥१५॥

Rajasi pralayam gatvā karmasaṅgiṣu jāyate;
Tathā pralīnaḥ tamasi mūḍhayoniṣu jāyate — 14. 15

'When one dies when *Rajas* predominates, he or she is born among those attached to action; similarly, dying in *Tamas,* he or she is born in the wombs of the irrational.'

If one passes away when *rajas* is predominant, he or she will be reborn among beings deeply 'attached to action', i.e. *karmasaṅgiṣu*. Such a person will be deeply attached to action. When *tamas* is predominant at the time of

death, one is born among 'foolish beings', i.e. *mūḍhayoniṣu.* In this way, when *tamas* is predominant, we mostly get birth among subhuman species. Therefore, here is a danger of going down in the scale of life and evolution. Whenever this subject is raised in the West, there is a protest: how can man or woman be born as an animal? In the West, there is the recognition of a big gulf between subhuman species and human species. We don't have such a theory in this country. In fact, Christian teaching in the West is that animals do not have a soul. That is their theory. We don't have such a theory. The soul is there; only their bodies are not evolved enough to manifest all the beauty of that soul. You can achieve it better in the human body. So, we don't have a cut and dry division between the subhuman and human species. Therefore, a soul can be born in the subhuman or human species according to its *karma.* If the *karma* demands that the person should have an animal body to manifest all that *vāsana* or latent desire, nobody can stop that birth in the subhuman levels of existence. That is the nature of this teaching which is free from the gulf between the subhuman and the human level. One continuous existence is what is taught here; and this view is nearer to the modern concept of evolution, that men and women have all come from a lower level to a higher level; if one does not behave well here, if one's tendencies are such that only an animal body can satisfy, then such a person has to be born in an animal body. One may not like it, but the law does not care for one's likes and dislikes. One has to: that is the language Vedanta uses in this context.

Questions were raised when I spoke in Western countries: suppose I die, will I be born in the country of the Whites, or of the Blacks, or of the Browns? That is the fear. For fun I would say, 'you have done very good work, and so you will be born among the non-Whites'. The next life of a person depends only upon 'whatever thoughts one has thought, and whatever deeds one has done', *yathā karma yathā śrutam*. The nature of one's life in the present existence will determine his or her future existence. Our people ask: 'if animal tendencies and cravings are there, why not have these fully satisfied with an animal frame?' That is the only place where you can fully satisfy that kind of desire. So, no likes and dislikes can govern a law operating on human life. *Karma* is a law. As you sow, so shall you reap, the *Bible* has said. That is the *karma* theory. If you sow ordinary grain,

you do not get high class rice or wheat as the crop. If you have done good deeds, thought good thoughts, helped and served people; that is beautiful. Your next life will certainly be far better than the present one. But if you always trouble people, indulge in wickedness, then naturally, you will be born in a different kind of embodiment in the future. You can't predict what it will be, but nature knows its own way of getting these things done. This is done by nature; not by the conscious mind. That is the one difference. Therefore, you can simply say: well, you deserved this, so you have got it. Nature has done so according to your own acts and thoughts in this life. So, protesting that it is below my dignity to be born in subhuman species is of no use in this condition. The only way is *to live better*; then there is no fear so long as we live in a good state of life, going higher and higher, day by day. So, *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*—one of these *guṇas* predominating in us will determine the nature of our next life.

Mūḍhayoni means birth in such a state where there is no knowledge. Such species have only instincts; they have no knowledge. Knowledge comes only at the human level.

कर्मण: सुकृतस्याहु: सात्त्विकं निर्मलं फलम्।
रजसस्तु फलं दु:खमज्ञानं तमस: फलम्॥१६॥

Karmaṇaḥ sukṛtasya āhuḥ sāttvikam nirmalam phalam;
Rajasastu phalam duḥkham ajñānam tamasaḥ phalam—14. 16

'The fruit of good action, they say, is *Sāttvika* and pure; verily, the fruit of *Rajas* is pain, and ignorance is the fruit of *Tamas*.'

The fruit of *karma* or action based on *sattva* is *nirmalam* or pure. *Nirmalam phalam*, 'pure fruit' will come out of *sāttvik karma* or good actions. *Rajasastu phalam duḥkham,* 'from *rajas* we get more of sorrow and suffering'. *Rajas* is full in a mind that is outgoing and active; out of that will come more of suffering. But, the fruit of *tamas* is *ajñānam*, 'ignorance'. *Ajñānam tamasaḥ phalam*, 'absolute ignorance is the fruit of *tāmasik karma*'.

सत्त्वात्सञ्जायते ज्ञानं रजसो लोभ एव च।
प्रमादमोहौ तमसो भवतोऽज्ञानमेव च॥१७॥

Sattvāt sañjāyate jñānam rajaso lobha eva ca;
Pramādamohau tamaso bhavato ajñānameva ca — 14. 17

'From *Sattva* arises wisdom, and from *Rajas* greed; miscomprehension, delusion and ignorance arise from *Tamas.*'

Through *sattva* comes knowledge; *rajas* gives one attachment; *lobha* or greed is a product of *rajas. Pramādamohau tamaso,* '*tamas* will give one *pramāda* and *moha* i.e., miscomprehension and delusion'; both are evil states of the mind. Absence of clarity, delusion, and utter ignorance—all that will come out of *tamas.*

ऊर्ध्वं गच्छन्ति सत्त्वस्था मध्ये तिष्ठन्ति राजसा:।
जघन्यगुणवृत्तस्था अधो गच्छन्ति तामसा:॥१८॥

Ūrdhvam gacchanti sattvasthā madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ;
Jaghanyaguṇavṛttasthā adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ — 14. 18

'The *Sattva*-abiding go upwards; the *Rājasik* dwell in the middle; and the *Tāmasik,* abiding in the function of the lowest *guṇa,* go downwards.'

Those established in *sattva* go upwards; they have higher states of evolution. It is not going physically upwards. In modern biology, sometimes these words come, though generally scientist do not use such words. But they are compelled to use these terms when they deal with human beings. There is one thing as going higher and still higher. The word 'higher' as used here has no meaning in physical science. It is a value-judgement. There is no going higher or lower in physical science; but they are compelled to use it because facts are such when they deal with human beings.

So, *ūrdhvam gacchanti sattvasthā,* 'those who are established in *sattva,* go upwards'; they evolve upwards, attain to higher and higher levels of evolution. These are not scientific terms; they are value-oriented terms. We cannot escape using these terms at the human level of evolution. That is

why the word 'higher' is often used. Today's biology says that there is that higher state of evolution. This human being can go higher and higher in psychosocial evolution and achieve, finally, *total fulfilment* of life. That is the goal of evolution—fulfilment. 'Are you fulfilled?', nature asks you. You must be able to say, 'Yes, I am'. That is the goal of evolution. *Madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ,* 'those who are dominated by *rajas,* they stay in the middle state.' They remain just as a human being; there is no evolution for such, because he or she is under *rajas.* Then, *tāmasāḥ,* 'those who are *tāmasik*'; *adho gacchanti,* 'they go downwards'; because *jaghanyaguṇavṛttasthā,* 'their activities will be of a very low nature'. They will go to that kind of low nature when *tamas* is predominant. 'The *tāmasik* persons abiding in the lowest *guṇa*', *jaghanyaguṇavṛttasthā,* go to perform these evils and go downward. So, *sāttvik* people go upwards, *rājasik* people remain in the middle, and *tāmasik* people go downwards in evolution. That is the description of the *guṇas* operating on human life from a long range point of view.

नान्यं गुणेभ्यः कर्तारं यदा द्रष्टानुपश्यति।
गुणेभ्यश्च परं वेत्ति मद्भावं सोऽधिगच्छति॥१९॥

Nānyam guṇebhyaḥ kartāram yadā draṣṭānupaśyati;
Guṇebhyaśca param vetti madbhāvam so'dhigacchati—14. 19

'When the seer beholds no agent other than the *guṇas* and knows That which is higher than the *guṇas,* he or she attains to My being.'

This is a very interesting verse. *Yadā draṣṭā anupaśyati,* 'when the seer beholds'; what does the seer behold? The seer beholds that nothing but the *guṇas* are the cause of all these activities going on within and outside. *Nānyam guṇebhyaḥ kartāram,* 'the agent of the actions is the *guṇas*' and not our Self. That we must realize; the Self is ever free, ever pure. We do not know this truth. We got mixed up with the *guṇas.* Now we realize that the *guṇas* are doing these things. The seer realizes this truth that all the activities are done by the *guṇas—guṇas* working in *guṇas* or *Prakṛti* or nature, and not the Self. *Guṇebhyaḥ ca param vetti,* 'he or she also knows That which is above the *guṇas*'; *param* means 'above' or 'superior to' the *guṇas*; *madbhāvam so adhigacchati,* 'he or she becomes one with Me,' says

Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Such a person becomes one with the Divine. That is called freedom or spiritual emancipation. This is the goal for all of us which is attained by first knowing the *guṇas,* then getting rid of their influence on us step by step, rising higher from *tamas* to *rajas* and then from *rajas* to *sattva*; eventually *sattva* also has to be thrown away because all these three *guṇas* are part and parcel of nature. The *Puruṣa* is far beyond it; It is ever free, ever pure. That knowledge must come. This is the idea in this section. The Sāṅkhya philosophy interpreted in terms of Vedanta gives us this knowledge.

गुणानेतानतीत्य त्रीन्देही देहसमुद्भवान्।
जन्ममृत्युजरादुःखैर्विमुक्तोऽमृतमश्नुते॥१०॥

Guṇān etān atītya trīn dehī dehasamudbhavān;
Janma mṛtyu jarā duḥkhaiḥ vimuktaḥ amṛtam aśnute—14. 20

'The embodied one having gone beyond these three *guṇas,* out of which the body is evolved, is freed from birth, death, old age and sorrow, and attains to immortality.'

Dehi, 'the embodied individual'; *guṇān etān atītya trīn*, 'having gone beyond these three *guṇas*'; *dehasamudbhavān*, '*guṇas* out of which the body has been formed'; we are wearing that body formed by the *guṇas*, but we are not dominated by that body when we have gone beyond the three *guṇas*. The Self in us is not a product of the *guṇas*; that is independent. But, at present it is touched by the body, controlled by the body, and naturally controlled by the three *guṇas*. So, *etān guṇān*, 'these *guṇas*'; *atītya*, 'having transcended'; *janma mṛtyu jarā duḥkhaiḥ vimukto,* 'he or she becomes free from *janma* or birth, *mṛtyu* or death, *jarā* or old age, and *duḥkha* or sorrow'; and *amṛtam aśnute,* 'he or she attains immortality;' that is one's true nature. In nature outside, it is all mortality; there is constant change. But the one that is immortal is your true Self. Thus, the embodied one, going beyond these three *guṇas* out of which the body is evolved, is no more touched by the changes of the body and becomes immortal. The body belongs to the *guṇas;* not to the 'I'. 'I' am beyond the *guṇas.* Now 'I' have achieved that state of 'having gone beyond the three *guṇas'.* 'I' have become *triguṇātīta. Vimukto amṛtam aśnute,* 'such a one becomes free and enjoys the immortal

state,' which is my natural state. Both Sāṅkhya and Vedanta take one to that state through all these instructions that they give. According to the Sāṅkhya, the *Puruṣa* is ever free; but, one forgets it, gets caught up in the coils of *Prakṛti,* and tries to be free from it. We try, but we are not able to free ourself. If we work hard, one day we will be able to do that, because that is everyone's true nature. If our metal pot is dirty, we just clean it with tamarind, ashes or other ingredients, and thus it will shine brilliantly. Mind also has to be cleaned like this. This is the teaching Vedanta and Sāṅkhya gives: how to make the embodied human being free? It is not salvation, but freedom. The state of freedom in Sāṅkhya is called *kaivalya avasthā,* 'aloneness', 'I am alone'. I am not caught up by the coils of *Prakṛti,* by nature and its products. That is the *kevala avasthā.* The Jaina philosophy, largely based on the Sāṅkhya system, speaks of the *Kevalin*. The great Tirthankaras were *Kevalins*, 'living alone, alone'. That is a wonderful state. I am not caught up by anything. That is one state; the other is *mokṣa* or freedom or liberation in the Vedantic language. Vedanta uses the Sāṅkhyan terms and Sāṅkhya too uses the Vedantic terms. Human emancipation, human freedom, that is the main subject; we are not free now; we are caught up in the coils of *Prakṛti,* not only of *rajas* and *tamas,* but also of *sattva.* Go beyond *sattva* also, says Vedanta; and today Sri Ramakrishna adds his own words to this wonderful truth. Why should I go beyond *sattva?*, because *sattva* also is a constituent of *Prakṛti.* So, you should not remain in bondage to *Prakṛti.*

Sri Ramakrishna expresses this through a beautiful parable: A person was going through a forest. Three thieves came and attacked him. After attacking and robbing him, the first thief said, 'Bind him and kill him. There is no use in keeping him alive.' They were about to kill, when the second thief said, 'Why should we kill him? We shall bind him nicely, leave him here and take his wealth with us and go away.' The third thief watched all this. After the two thieves had gone away, he came to this person and said, 'So sorry, you are in this trouble.' He freed him from the bondage and said, 'Follow me. I shall show you your home.' And thus, he took that person out of the forest and pointing with his finger said, 'That is your town. There is your house. You go now.' At that time, this man was so thankful that he said to the third thief, 'You have done so much good to me.

You please come with me to my house. I want to honour you.' 'No, no,' replied he, 'I cannot go. I am also a thief. The police will be after me! I can do just this much for you.' The first thief was *tamas;* the second was *rajas;* and the third was *sattva.* All these three are thieves, but one of them is a nice thief, very kind-hearted and good! You must have seen this happen in normal life too. When one is attacked by robbers, sometimes one finds that there are even some fine robbers among them with some human feelings. But they are also under the surveillance of the police. They are not free to go where we live. So, Sri Ramakrishna said, *sattva* also is a thief. You have to go beyond *sattva* also. In the second chapter (*śloka* 45)*,* Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said, *traiguṇya viṣayā vedā nistraiguṇyo bhava arjuna,* 'all the Vedas deal with the three *guṇas;* Arjuna, you go beyond the three *guṇas.*' So, that idea was taken up there. Now, in this chapter it is specially mentioned: 'Go beyond the three *guṇas;*' become a *triguṇātīta*—a wonderful state of pure freedom and delight. Great sages attained it; all can attain it depending on the effort one puts forth. If not now, next time I shall get it—that is why the Hindus believe in reincarnation. I could not achieve everything in this birth; I shall continue the effort in the next birth. That was discussed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the sixth chapter, the *Dhyāna yoga* chapter of the *Gītā.*

When one goes beyond the three *guṇas,* he or she gets freedom from *janma*, *jarā*, *mṛtyu* and *duḥkha*; and thus he or she becomes *vimukta* or free; and moreover, *amṛtam aśnute,* he or she enjoys immortality. The highest state is the immortal state. We are mortal now; the body is mortal; but what is inside the body is not mortal. The Atman is immortal, but as it gets caught up in the body, it becomes like the mortal. When you realize the highest truth, you become immortal, deathless. When Bhagavān Buddha attained *bodhi* or illumination, he went to Benares and told the five disciples there, 'The immortal has been gained by me. You can also try and get it.' These are all strong affirmations of people who have realized this state. Anyone can attain it; this is only a state. Buddha said that Buddhahood is not a person; it is a state. Anybody can attain Buddhahood. That is how Bhagavān Buddha expressed this great idea.

These words of Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave Arjuna an opportunity to ask a question: 'What is the nature of that state of *triguṇātīta*?' When in the second chapter Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said (*ślokas* 52, 53), 'let the *buddhi* go beyond the taint of

illusion', and let it be 'established on the firm foundation of the Atman'—which is called the *sthitaprajña* state—then Arjuna asked this question (*śloka* 54): 'What is the nature of this *sthitaprajña* state?' In a number of verses Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave a wonderful presentation of that man or woman of free spirit who moves in the world with compassion, love, and who is never worked up by anything. That description of *sthitaprajña,* 'whose wisdom is steady', is wonderful. And now Śrī Kṛṣṇa is describing the *triguṇātīta* state to Arjuna.

In fact, in all civilized societies more human beings of *sāttvik* type are present. We have to treat even a criminal with some respect, especially when he or she is not convicted. Once I told the police in a police training school where I was speaking to them, 'when you catch a criminal or an alleged criminal, and ask him or her to get into the police van, you can tell that in a nice way, "please get in".' We don't do that; we just kick that person into the police van with all the roughness. Why? What is the necessity? His or her punishment comes later. Why do you punish that person now? Respect him or her for being a citizen of your own country. Now, in these matters, human behaviour has to undergo a big change before we claim to have become truly civilized. We are very rough in dealing with other human beings. A little element of *sattva* must come into our lives. When people think about this, they get the impulse to change from *tamas* to *rajas*, and from *rajas* to *sattva.* That is the importance of this science of three *guṇas.* They are there in animals, in cosmic regions, as well as in human beings. They interpenetrate the whole of nature. Nature itself is composed of the three *guṇas.*

And coming to this type of discussion about the three *guṇas,* we find Arjuna asking this question: What is the nature of the human being who has gone beyond the three *guṇas?* We see people with all the *guṇas* in them—various types of human beings are there. If there is a type which is beyond the three *guṇas,* I would like to know how does such a one behave, and how to understand that person. As I have said earlier that this type of question had come before at the end of the second chapter, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke of a steady *buddhi*, *sthitaprajña.* Arjuna had then asked, what is the nature of a *sthitaprajña*? We don't find *sthitaprajñas* everywhere. The mind is usually shaken by every experience. Here is a person who is not shaken by

anything; he or she is absolutely steady. What is the nature of that person? The last few verses of the second chapter were devoted to describing the nature of a *sthitaprajña; sthita* means 'steady', *prajñā* means 'mind' or 'wisdom'. It means a steady wisdom. Then the *triguṇa* idea came here and there. Now, this chapter is entirely devoted to the three *guṇas.* And the last part of it says what is the nature of one who has gone beyond the three *guṇas.* Sri Ramakrishna refers to this in his *Gospel:* Children up to the age of five are beyond the three *guṇas.* These *guṇas* begin to operate only after five years of age. Little children are spontaneous. They are living absolutely a free life. That is their nature. So, in India, the *Parmahamsas*—those who go beyond the three *guṇas,* those who go beyond even the mind and are highly spiritual—are compared to children of five years of age. These children are absolutely pure. They do not know how to be clever, how to hide and all that; they are just open. I remember one incident at the time of evacuation during the partition of India in 1947. One child saw his father a little frightened. They got into a ship in Karachi which I had arranged for them to migrate to India. The father was an engineer. And when some Pakistani volunteers came near by, naturally the father became a little worried and thought: what will happen?, they may take me out of the ship. He was an engineer of the state. I had told him, 'Don't migrate until I tell you. When things are too bad, I shall let you know.' So, at this time, he became slightly worried. And this boy saw his father and asked, 'Father, you are bunking. Why did you do that?' The child is putting to his father the straight question: Are you frightened? The father himself told me this story later. That is how children act. They are absolutely straight forward, and not cunning—nothing of that kind is there. They are like the sages, and sages like to keep little children with them, because they are absolutely pure, beyond the three *guṇas.* That is Sri Ramakrishna's example given in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.*

Here, Arjuna asks this question:

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca—

'Arjuna said:'

कैर्लिङ्गैस्त्रीन्गुणानेतानतीतो भवति प्रभो।
किमाचार: कथं चैतांस्त्रीन्गुणानतिवर्तते॥२१॥

Kairliṅgaiḥ trīn guṇān etān atīto bhavati prabho;
Kimācāraḥ katham caitān trīn guṇān ativartate—14. 21

'By what marks, O Lord, is he or she (known) who has gone beyond these three *guṇas*? What is his or her conduct, and how does he or she pass beyond these three *guṇas*?'

Kairliṅgaiḥ, 'by what indications'; *trīn guṇān etān atīto bhavati prabho,* 'can we understand, O Lord, that a person has gone beyond the three *guṇas*?' *Kimācāraḥ,* those who go beyond the three *guṇas,* 'how do they function?, how do they behave?' How can we understand their conduct and behaviour from outside? *Katham caitān trīn guṇān ativartate,* 'and how does he or she go beyond the three *guṇas?*' This much is the question, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa answers.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said:'

प्रकाशं च प्रवृत्तिं च मोहमेव च पाण्डव।
न द्वेष्टि सम्प्रवृत्तानि न निवृत्तानि काङ्क्षति॥२२॥

Prakāśam ca pravṛttim ca mohameva ca pāṇḍava;
Na dveṣṭi sampravṛttāni na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati — 14. 22

'He or she hates not the appearance of light (the effect of *Sattva*), activity (the effect of *Rajas*), and delusion (the effect of *Tamas*), (in his or her own mind), O Pāṇḍava, nor longs for them when absent.'

We have studied in earlier verses three factors associated with the three *guṇas.* One is called *prakāśam,* 'the illumining attitude', the light inside. *Sattva* produces light inside. Luminous light called *prakāśam;* it is the effect of *sattva*. The second one is *pravṛtti* which means 'intense activity'; that is the effect of *rajas.* And the last is *moha,* 'delusion', which is the fruit of *tamas.* This human being who is beyond the three *guṇas*, *na dveṣṭi*, 'does

not become unhappy', when all these three—*prakāśa, pravṛtti* and *moha* —'make their appearance', *sampravṛttāni*, within him or her. *Na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati*, 'nor is he or she going to be worried if they do not manifest'. Such a person has gone beyond them. These come and go but they never touch such a person. That is the language. If you are well dressed for winter, any severity of winter can be withstood, for you have dressed well. There is no fear. But, if you are lightly dressed, then you will be in trouble. Likewise, when you are well strengthened by your spiritual realization, and when you have gone beyond the *guṇas,* then let the *guṇas* come or let them go. What does it matter? That is when you have gone beyond *prakṛti* functioning in your body and mind. The Atman is beyond the *prakṛti.* Since you are established in the Atman, these *guṇas* do not give you any trouble. Their presence or absence do not make any difference. That is the first characteristic. *Na dveṣṭi sampravṛttāni,* 'when they are active in you, you don't get angry or upset'; and *na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati,* 'you do not feel longing for them when they have ceased to be active in you'. You are indifferent because you are beyond these. It just does not matter. It is just like the story told by Swami Vivekananda of a mosquito sitting on a bull (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 6, p. 149). If it sits on a baby, it troubles the baby. You have to drive it away. But what can it do to a bull. 'A mosquito was sitting on a bull's horn; then his conscience troubled him and he said, "Mr. Bull, I have been sitting here a long time. Perhaps I annoy you. I am sorry, I will go away." But the bull replied, "Oh, no, not at all! Bring your whole family and live on my horn; what can you do to me?"' That is the state of strength. When you realize the Atman, this coming and going of the *guṇas* will not make any difference to you. This is worth thinking about. If you can get even a little of this feeling, how beautiful can life be! A little inner strength coming from our inner nature is what this verse recommends to you.

उदासीनवदासीनो गुणैर्यो न विचाल्यते।
गुणा वर्तन्त इत्येव योऽवतिष्ठति नेङ्गते॥२३॥

Udāśīnavad āśīno guṇairyo na vicālyate;
Guṇā vartanta ityeva yo'vatiṣṭhati neṅgate — 14. 23

‘He or she who sitting like one unconcerned, is moved not by the *guṇas,* who knowing that the *guṇas* operate, is Self-established, and swerves not.’

He is absolutely *udāsīnaḥ,* ‘indifferent’ to all these coming and going of the *guṇas* and their effects. These are all *actual* possibilities for every human being. A little training, a little attention in that direction is all that is needed. For example, when we are young we get terribly upset when somebody abuses us. We react very strongly. But the same person, when he or she becomes old enough, does not react in the same way when somebody abuses him or her. Because that person has attained some knowledge or experience from life, and says, ‘It doesn’t matter. Let it go.’ But when we are young, we react very strongly at times. You can actually see these things happen. What is ‘serious’ at one time is not serious at another time. Some new value has entered in to the human system. You can go beyond these ups and downs. *Udāsīnavat āsīnaḥ,* ‘remaining indifferent’ like an *udāsīnaḥ*, like one unconcerned. People are shouting at him or her, criticising him or her, but he or she does not mind. The attitude is, ‘Go on, and I will enjoy it’! Sri Ramakrishna said, when a person abuses you, you just hear what that person says and clear out what these words mean. Convert the words into letters, sounds, etc. It is just nothing more than a combination of letters and sounds. This kind of a capacity to react to such situations is a spiritual capacity. Everybody can develop this capacity. Or, one can be extremely sensitive. Somebody scolds me and I go and commit suicide! That also I can do. Such people are very very sensitive with no spiritual strength at all.

When I was in Mysore in 1920s, every time the examination results used to be announced, some student or the other would go and die in the big Kukanahalli tank in the city, because his or her name had not appeared in the list of successful candidates. He or she would not even go home, but go straight to the tank and die. What does it show? A very weak mind! There is no strength to withstand even one mishap in life. That was the normal custom and so they used to place guards during the examination time and when the results were to be declared. What I mean to say is that there are different levels of strength. We need a little more strength. The only message of Vedanta is: be strong, and be fearless. There are many things to frighten you, but there is also a profound dimension within you. If you can manifest a bit of it, you become fearless. You can stand the nonsense

(onslaughts) of life. That is what Vedanta wants to make of humanity: strong and fearless. There are causes to fear, but we can rise above them by understanding our true nature. *Guṇairyo na vicālyate* , 'he or she is never shaken by the operation of the three *guṇas*'. All these movements of the world are the operation of the three *guṇas. Guṇas* acting on the *guṇas* run the universe. Why should I worry about it? *Yo'vatiṣṭhati*, 'those who stay quiet with this conviction'; *neṅgate*, 'are not disturbed'. They are not shaken at all. That is a type of achievement which is very much needed in human life. That is called character strength. We are not to be like that little plant, *Mimosa pudica*. If you just blow a little air on it, it becomes like a dead plant. After some time it comes back to life. We are not *Mimosa pudica;* we have got some strength within. That is a wonderful idea.

समदु:खसुख: स्वस्थ: समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चन:।
तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुति:॥२४॥

Samaduḥkhasukhaḥ svasthaḥ samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ;
Tulyapriyāpriyo dhīraḥ tulyanindātmasamstutiḥ — 14. 24

'He or she who is alike in pleasure and pain, Self-abiding, who regards a clod of earth, a stone, and gold alike; who is same to agreeable and disagreeable events, who is wise, and same in censure and praise.'

Sama duḥkha sukha means 'mind is even in misery and happiness'. That is a constant teaching in the *Gītā*, namely, *Samatva;* the mind becomes *sama* i.e., constant, steady. It may go a little up and down, but at once the mind becomes steady again. It cannot remain upset for long. *Sama duḥkha sukha* is a very important characteristic. In the spiritual life we have to start with this *samatva.* So, this *Gītā* defines *yoga* as *samatva: samatvam yoga ucyate.* We should be able to keep the mind in a steady condition. Then nothing can shake it up and down—neither *sukha* nor *duḥkha.* That is a wonderful quality. As I often describe it in modern neurological terms, nature has achieved for you a *samatva* in your body. There is a constancy in your body. The temperature is constant. Blood constituents are constant. When you work, these change; but they return to their original state. The body has a built-in mechanism, a homeostatic mechanism as they call it. The body has got it; but, who got it for the body?, nature. Nature has done

this for you. Now you will have to acquire for yourself a higher level of homeostasis. The mind is to be steady; it is a built-in mechanism that is needed to make it stay in equilibrium. That is your responsibility. *Śama* and *dama* are two great words in Sanskrit, meaning 'control of the mind', and 'control of the sensory energy system'. If you have these, then you have that kind of *samatva* within your system. Without *samatva,* no higher life is possible.

This is a dictate of modern neurology. In fact, in that book on neurology called *The Living Brain* by Gray Walter, the author quotes his great teacher, Sir Joseph Barcroft of Cambridge University, who said that an equanimous context is essential for a free life. Without that equanimity within, free life cannot be, higher life cannot be. When you take your ship across the highly choppy wave system in the Atlantic, it will not create ripples. Ripples will be there only in a calm lake. Those ripple systems are very important in all scientific thought. A ripple system will be produced only when the lake is calm and when the boat plies in it. Therefore, when the mind is calm, great things come, great new developments come. So, this is a very important statement in neurology. Further, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here *svasthaḥ* which means 'living in your Self', 'steady', not taken out of your Self. *Sva sthaḥ,* 'being established in one's Self'. Then *samaloṣṭāsmakāñcanaḥ,* 'the mind has an equal reaction to *loṣṭa* or a little bit of earth, *asma* or a stone, and *kāñcana* or gold.' In all these things, the mind does not make much distinction. That person has developed that equanimous attitude. A clod of earth, a stone, and gold—what are they?, they are the same material. Basically, they are the same; that knowledge comes. Therefore, one can keep oneself free and above all temptation. Further, *tulyapriyāpriyo,* 'equal minded when things pleasant or unpleasant happens to oneself'; *dhīraḥ,* 'wise'; and *tulya nindātmasamstutiḥ,* 'the mind is even when abused or praised'. In fact, according to our political philosophy given in the *Mahābhārata* and other books, all rulers and administrators must possess some of these qualities. If somebody praises an administrator, he or she loses one's head; someone else condemns and again one loses one's head. Such people cannot be good administrators or good rulers. An average person must develop a measure of this equanimity of vision or *samadṛṣṭi*, and equal mindedness or *samatva.*

मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः।
सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते॥२५॥

Mānāpamānayoḥ tulyaḥ tulyo mitrāripakṣayoḥ;
Sarvārambhaparityāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate — 14. 25

'He or she is said to have gone beyond the *guṇas* who is same in honour and disgrace, same to friend and foe, and who has relinquished all undertakings.'

Mānāpamānayoḥ, 'in *māna* or honour, and in *apamāna* or dishonour'; *tulyaḥ,* 'whose mind is steady'; and further *tulyo mitrāripakṣayoḥ,* who is 'same in dealing with friend and enemy'; such a one doesn't have any attachment. There, he or she keeps the mind even. And *sarvārambhaparityāgī,* 'he or she gives up this kind of initiation of projects all the time'. A feverish mind initiates so many projects all the time. But this person has given up all that feverishness. His or her mind is steady; whatever is to be done, he or she does it, and does it very well. *Yadā yat kartumāyati tada tat kurute,* so it is said in the *Aṣṭāvakra samhitā* (xviii. 49)*,* 'a perfect man or woman will simply do things as they come.' He or she does not *run* after doing things. Whatever comes to him or her, he or she does that. Because he or she does not need more than what is needed to preserve the body. *Guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate,* 'such persons are known as *guṇātītaḥ,* beyond the three *guṇas*.' The external pressures from the world do not condition them. They have become unconditioned by all these. They have become free and that is the goal of human life. This human being, shaken by nature and its forces all the time, slowly develops a certain inner strength to resist all this and then develops an equanimous mind, and finally goes beyond all of them. That is called *guṇātītaḥ.* Everybody has the possibility of becoming a *guṇātītaḥ.* But, it comes after a very long struggle. And it is good to begin this struggle and gain initially at least 5 or 10 per cent of this great capacity.

मां च योऽव्यभिचारेण भक्तियोगेन सेवते।
स गुणान्समतीत्यैतान् ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते॥२६॥

Mām ca yo avyabhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena sevate;

Sa guṇān samatītya etān brahmabhūyāya kalpate — 14. 26

‘And he or she who serves Me with unswerving devotion, having gone beyond the *guṇas,* is fitted for becoming one with Brahman.’

Ultimately, turn your attention to Me, the one Self in all embodied beings, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as the *antaryāmin,* the inner Self of all. *Yo ca mām avyabhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena sevate,* ‘one who serves Me through the *yoga* of *bhakti*, which is undisturbed, straight—with that kind of steady *bhakti*’; *sa guṇān samatītya etān,* ‘he or she transcends all these *guṇas*’; and *brahmabhūyāya kalpate,* ‘becomes fit to be one with Brahman’, that Ultimate Reality. Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *bhakti* comes in here. Sri Ramakrishna said, without *bhakti* you can try to control the mind, control these various *guṇas* within you, but you will find it difficult. But, if there is love for God, it becomes much easier. Love can make many things easier, especially if love is directed to the Divine. Therefore, a *bhakta* has a greater facility to control the mind and go beyond all these than one who is not a *bhakta.* So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *yo mām sevate,* ‘one who serves Me’; *avyabhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena,* ‘through one-pointed devotion‘, with *ekānta bhakti*; *sa etān guṇān samatītya,* ‘he or she transcends all these *guṇas*’*;* and *brahmabhūyāya kalpate,* ‘becomes fit for achieving oneness with Brahman’.

ब्रह्मणो हि प्रतिष्ठाहममृतस्याव्ययस्य च।
शाश्वतस्य च धर्मस्य सुखस्यैकान्तिकस्य च॥२७॥

Brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham amṛtasya avyayasya ca;
Śāśvatasyaca dharmasya sukhasya ekāntikasya ca — 14. 27

‘For I am well known as the abode of Brahman—the Immortal and Immutable—and of everlasting *dharma* and Absolute Bliss.’

Brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham, ’I am the very basis or support of even Brahman’; *amṛtasya avyayasya ca,* ‘of the immortal, and of the imperishable’. In the next chapter we shall be dealing with the *Puruṣottama* in the *Puruṣottama yoga.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa is called the *uttama puruṣa,* ‘supremely Divine Person’. *Bhakti* is directed to that Divine Person. This Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as the Divine Incarnation, the Self in all, *brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham,* is also

'the *pratiṣṭhā* or basis or foundation of Brahman' which is *amṛta* or immortal and *avyaya* or immutable. He is also the basis of *śāśvatasyaca dharmasya,* 'of the Eternal Dharma' which protects this universe; and also *sukhasya ekāntikasya ca,* 'of infinite one-pointed happiness'. He is the basis of all these.

Brahman has two dimensions, what we call two aspects: *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa*, 'without and with qualities'; *nirākāra* and *sākāra,* 'without and with form'. Brahman and *Śakti; Śakti* is called the Power of Brahman. Brahman and the Power are non-different. They are the same. Just like the examples given by Sri Ramakrishna: A snake coiled up is *nirguṇa brahman;* the same snake in motion is called *saguṇa brahman.* The same universe which is with name and form is *saguṇa;* when it is beyond name and form, it is called *nirguṇa.* It is this wonderful Brahman that comes through *Śakti* as the Incarnation of the Divine. He can say, 'I am one with the highest'. He has every right to say so, because He is so. He is not physically conditioned. As a human being, He behaves like any of us. In the fourth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā,* we studied the nature of an Incarnation and discussed how difficult it is to discover His infinite dimensions when we see only a finite dimension. The highest is manifesting through an Incarnation. And so this fourteenth chapter ends with the statement: *Brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham*, 'I am the basis of even Brahman' as the *uttama puruṣa,* the Supreme Person; *amṛtasya avyayasya ca,* 'and also of the Immortal and Immutable'; *śāśvatasyaca dharmasya,* 'and of the Eternal Dharma' which sustains this universe.

We, in India, call religion as the Eternal Dharma, *Sanātana Dharma*. It has no name, no location. It is a set of Truths. It runs through various religions of the world. You can see *Sanātana Dharma* in every religion. Other things such as the dogmas and rules are called *yuga dharma.* A *dharma* for a particular people, for a particular age, which deals with matters such as how to dress, eat, perform marriages—all these are a part of *yuga dharma* or *smṛti;* it is personal preference at a particular time. The Eternal Religion dealing with eternal verities which are true, which can be tested and verified, is called *Śruti. Śruti* is truth as it is. *Smṛti* and *Śruti* are two different things. The first is *matam* and the second deals with *tattvam. Matam* is, for example, personal preference regarding food, dress, etc. That

is alright. One is absolutely free in these matters. You can change it from one age to another; and therefore it is called *matam.* The other, the *tattvam,* is the Truth. You have to conform to it. This Truth has to be realized by each one of us. That is why it is called *tattvam.* We, in India, made this distinction between *matam* and *tattvam. Matam* is always plural. *Tattvam* is always singular. In physical life we say two plus two is four, or fire is hot. That cannot be changed. Similarly, the Atman is ever-free and that is our true nature. That is the *tattvam* about human beings and of all existence. The other is *matam* about human beings. One who realizes the *tattvam* about human beings is called *tattva-darśi.*

When Swami Vivekananda was speaking in America, somebody put to him the following question during the question hour: Are you not, Swami, preaching some sort of hypnotism? Straight came the answer: No, I am dehypnotizing you. You are already hypnotized. I am black, I am white, I am poor, I am rich, etc. You are not any of these! You are that eternal reality, the Atman. That is your true nature. My work is to dehypnotize you. That is true religion. Everyone of us is under a lot of hypnotic influences. That is what makes us inclined to quarrel and fight. A little search for *tattvam* or Truth, a little scientific mind in the wider sense, should be there. Search for truth is the sign of science. What is the truth of things? We can have any number of beliefs. Is the belief true?, that question must be asked. That is how you come to science in the inner world, and that is Vedanta. We deal with *tattvam;* it is called *tattva-śāstra.* We made a distinction between *matam* and *tattvam,* and so we made changes in the *smṛti*, in the *yuga dharma.* It went on changing. But *Śruti* is Eternal. *Sanātana Dharma* comes from the *Śruti* which discusses the nature of the Atman, nature of inter-human relation, nature of the supreme Reality. These are all *Śruti,* these are all *tattva.* You have to accept them, test them and verify them for yourself. But, a *smṛti* teaching cannot be verified. You have only to believe it and follow. This way you must wear your shirt, you must wear a *śikhā* or hair tuft like this, etc. Such a *smṛti* we had in the past; now we have given up some of these customs. But, the *Sanātana Dharma* does not go simply because we have made some changes in the *yuga dharma.* This is so because *Sanātana Dharma* is based on something else. Sixty years ago one grandfather went on a fast because his grandchild cut off his *śikhā* or hair

tuft! We had to persuade him not to do so by saying that these are changing times; somebody likes to wear a *śikhā* and some others do not like. There is enough provision in our philosophy for such changes; it is only *smṛti;* it is not *Śruti.* And thus, with a little persuasion, he gave up that fasting. This understanding has kept us steady—the distinction between *śruti* and *smṛti*. How many *smṛtis* we had! Now all those *smṛtis* have gone and we have the Hindu Code Bill and the democratic Constitution. That is the *smṛti* by which we now live. We can't break any rule of this Constitution. But the *Śruti* is eternal. Upaniṣads are called the *Śruti.* There is no second set of Upaniṣads. Only one set of Upaniṣads are there because they deal with eternal verities. That is called *Sanātana Dharma.* Any amount of changes will take place at the periphery of life. The central idea remains the same. 'The One remains and the many change and pass' is a line from Shelley's beautiful poem. When you are dealing with the many, you are dealing with the *smṛti.* Similarly, when you are dealing with the One, you are dealing with the *Śruti.*

This is how chapter fourteen has been concluded with an analysis of how to go beyond the three *guṇas.* It is good to make a try so that we can at least lift ourselves from lifelong *tamas* to *rajas.* That itself is a great achievement. Laziness, absolutely no interest in anything, but interest in troubling others—all such things come out of *tamas.* Then we come to *rajas* with a beautiful development. But when we go to *sattva,* we have the best development in the form of happy human relations, with no fights and quarrels and litigation. Just now a little *sattva* has come into our politics. Till now it was all under *rajas* and *tamas.* So, you see that the political life of a nation can either be *tāmasik* or *rājasik*, or mixed with both, or a little *sāttvik.* When it becomes *sāttvik,* then its intense activities will not create fire, tension and suffering. Only peaceful activities will be there. It is good for our people to know that these are the possibilities. When we know it, we will certainly try to raise our activities beyond *rajas* to a little bit of *sattva*. That kind of politics is truly democratic. Democracy can thrive only under such conditions. Under other conditions it will be tossed up and down. Today it is nice and tomorrow it goes wrong. We don't want that kind of up and down in our democratic experiment.

Having finished the chapter 14 on the nature of the three *guṇas,* we next enter the fifteenth chapter.

इति गुणत्रय विभाग योगो नाम चर्तुदशोऽध्यायः ।

Iti Guṇatraya vibhāga yogo nāma caturdaśo'dhyāyaḥ —

'Thus ends the fourteenth chapter, designated *The Discrimination of the three guṇas.'*

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 15

Puruṣottama-Yoga
The Way to the Supreme Spirit

Having finished the fourteenth chapter of the *Gītā* on the three *guṇas,* we now enter the fifteenth one. It is a very important chapter. We begin with a verse which asks us to take a look at the whole universe through an imagery—the imagery of a tree. Imagine the whole world as a mighty tree. The tree is a very important element in Indian culture. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa begins his discourse in the fifteenth chapter with such a comparison.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said.'

ऊर्ध्वमूलमध:शाखमश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम्।
छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित्॥१॥

Ūrdhvamūlam adhaḥśākham aśvattham prāhuravyayam;
Chandāmsi yasya parṇāni yastam veda sa vedavit — 15. 1

'They speak of an eternal *Aśvattha* rooted above and branching below whose leaves are the Vedas; one who knows it, is a Veda-knower.'

The teaching is that the universe is like a tree, but a unique type of tree —*ūrdhvamūlam adhaḥśākham*, 'with roots above and branches below'. That is the only difference between a normal tree and this tree of the universe. *Aśvattham prāhuravyayam,* 'this is called an eternal *aśvattha* tree'. *Aśvattha* tree is the Ficus religiosa, also called *Pippala*. It is a holy tree of India along with another holy tree called *Vaṭa* or Ficus benghalensis. This whole universe is like the *aśvattha* tree, the tree of existence. How? With roots above and branches below. What a nice picture! What an amount of thinking has gone before it to produce such an imagery! We can see here

high class poetry. And this *aśvattha* tree is *avyaya,* 'imperishable'; *prāhuravyayam,* 'it is called eternal'. *Chandāmsi yasya parṇāni,* 'leaves of this tree, *yasya parṇāni,* are the Vedic utterances, *chandāmsi.*' The leaves protect the tree; therefore, they are called *chandāmsi,* 'the utterances of the Vedas'. *Veda means knowledge*. *Yastam veda sa vedavit,* 'One who knows this truth, he or she understands the Vedas.' Moreover, we have seen in one of the earlier chapters of *Gītā* (10. 26), where Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks of Himself as the *Aśvattha* among the trees. So, from the Vedas up to the *Gītā,* this concept of the tree as a symbol of existence—the tree of existence as we call it—has been there with some modifications here and there. We find that the tree plays a great part in all cultural history, and primitive human beings living in the midst of trees looked upon the trees as something very sacred. They are also a place for their gods. In our Vedic civilization we lived among the trees in the forest and secured education in the midst of the forest. Thus the forest had a great place in our cultural heritage. And so, we selected some trees in the forest for special attention. Those are the *aśvattha* or *pippala* and the *vaṭa* or Ficus benghalensis. These are all very holy trees in our tradition. Out of this we developed a philosophy. We did not leave it at that primitive stage. We applied the great Vedantic thought to these great feelings of the people and produced a remarkable philosophy out of it. Thus, this tree became holy to us; later on, in the 6th century bc, it became still more holy when Buddha sat under this tree and attained illumination. From that time onward, this tree began to be called as the Bodhi *vṛkṣa* or the tree of illumination.

But how is it in other parts of the world? Trees are highly sacred, as I said, in all primitive communities. It is only in the Semitic religious communities that we do not find much sacredness in the trees. Sacredness is only for one god which is also extra-cosmic. That one god alone is sacred and none of these manifestations.

On the other hand, in Europe—in Scandinavia—trees had very high status; specially one tree; they call it Yggdrasill or the ash tree, and that was considered to be very sacred in Scandinavian mythology. And the British thinker Carlyle has written a very beautiful paragraph about the nature of that Yggdrasill or the ash tree (*Heroes and Hero worship*, p. 27). But the difference between the Indian tree used as an imagery here and the

Scandinavian tree is that the roots of the latter extend below like any other tree, and of the former, we put the roots above, because philosophy came to handle the holiness of that tree. And philosophy found that from the cause the effect has come. The effect is visible; the cause is not visible. And therefore, in that invisible world of Cause, beyond time and space, is the root of this tree. And in time and space that root grows into a mighty tree called the manifested universe tree, or the *samsāra vṛkṣa.* When we look at it from the point of view of the tree as the manifested universe, we call it *samsāra vṛkṣa;* when we think of the root of the tree, we call it *brahma vṛkṣa.* Both the appellations, *samsāra vṛkṣa* and *brahma vṛkṣa,* are correct. Here we are dealing with *samsāra vṛkṣa.* From the One the many, with all its differences, have come. This is called the cosmos. We are in the cosmos. But what is the root of it? That kind of questioning opens up scientific and philosophical insight. In India this was taken up by very great sages who were highly intellectual and capable people. They produced a most remarkable system of philosophy and also a mythology which illustrated that high philosophy. Some of the mythologies are very very significant from that point of view, and what beautiful imageries come out of some of them!

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* imagery, developed further in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* speaks of a tree on which two birds are there: one is the *jīva* or the human soul, and the other is the ultimate Reality, the *Paramātman* or Brahman, or Atman. That is a wonderful example given. These are the imageries used to illustrate this teaching which is otherwise very difficult to understand; an illustration makes it easier to comprehend. So, they brought this imagery of the two birds, and other imageries as well. This whole universe is treated as a tree: *ūrdhvamūlam adhaḥśākham aśvattham,* 'this *aśvattha* is *ūrdhvamūlam,* with roots above, and *adhaḥśākham*, branches below'*; avyayam,* 'imperishable', immutable. It is always there. People come and go, but the universe remains. Birds come and go, but the tree remains.

This is the first verse which is an adaptation of the verse from *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* where the same language is used (II. iii. 1).

Ūrdhvamūlo avāk śākhaḥ eṣo'śvatthaḥ sanātanaḥ;

tadeva śukram tad brahma tadeva amṛtam ucyate;
Tasmin lokāḥ śritāḥ sarve tadu nātyeti kaścana;
etad vai tat —

'That is the tree with *ūrdhvamūlo avāk śākhaḥ*, "roots above and branches below"; *eṣo'śvatthaḥ sanātanaḥ,* "this is a *sanātana* or eternal *aśvatthaḥ* tree"; *tadeva śukram tad brahma,* "that alone is pure, that alone is Brahman"; *tadeva amṛtam ucyate,* "that alone is truly immortal, it is said"; *tasmin lokāḥ śritāḥ sarve,* "all the worlds are fixed on that tree"; *tadu nātyeti kaścana,* "none transcends that".'

That is what the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* has stated. Similarly, here also this idea is expressed. In his comment on this *Upaniṣad* verse, Śaṅkarācārya puts flesh and blood, as it were, into the bare Upaniṣadic imagery and makes this tree of existence pulsate with life and movement. In view of this, I quote it in full:

'This *aśvattha* tree, consisting of unbroken and manifold miseries of birth, death, and grief; changing its nature every moment like (the products of) magic, waters of the mirage, (or) a city formed by cloud-formations in the sky, etc.; being of such nature as these, to be perceived only to vanish again and become ultimately nonexistent like a tree; insubstantial like the stem of the plantain tree; the subject of doubt-ridden conclusions by the intellects of many hundreds of sceptics; the mysterious, unascertained *phenomenal fact* to seekers of scientific truth; receiving its substantiality (reality) from the supreme Brahman, as ascertained by Vedanta; issuing from the seed of *avyakta* (undifferentiated nature) constituted of *avidyā* (ignorance), *kāma* (desire), and *karma* (action); having for its sprout *hiraṇyagarbha* (cosmic mind), which is Brahman in Its manifested form, and which combines in itself the two powers of knowledge and action; having for its trunk the various subtle bodies of all living beings; acquiring its pride of stature through getting irrigated by the waters of the respective sense-desires of these living beings; having for its tender buds the objects perceived by the intellect and sense-organs; having for its leaves (the knowledge contained in) the *Śrutis* (Vedas), the *Smṛtis* (books on religious and social law and duty), *nyāya* (logic and scientific method), *vidyā* (the sciences collectively), and *upadeśa* (spiritual instruction); with lovely

flowers consisting of sacrifice, charity, austerity, and various other deeds; endowed with diverse tastes such as the experiences of joy and sorrow; having innumerable fruits on which living beings subsist; with its (secondary) branches (consisting of tendencies) well grown by being irrigated with the waters of the respective desires of beings, and fastened firm by intertwining; with the "nests" built by birds, namely, the worlds beginning with what is called *satya* (the plane of Truth) built by all living beings from Brahmā (the cosmic mind) downwards; reverberating with the diverse and tumultuous sounds arising from the joys and sorrows of beings due to their pleasures and pains resulting from dancing, vocal singing, instrumental singing, joking, clapping on the shoulders, laughing, pulling, crying with exclamations of "release me", "release me", etc.; this tree of *samsāra* (relative existence), whose nature is such as to rustle constantly like (the leaves of) the *aśvattha* tree due to the wind of desire and action, is to be destroyed by the weapon of non-attachment forged by the realization of the unity of Brahman and Atman as taught by Vedanta.'

Some people, not all, want to know what is the *origin* of this tree? Where has it come from?, some ask; and they become philosophers; they become scientists. They want to know the root. Among such questioners were the great sages of the Upaniṣads who discovered the root of this tree as Brahman, the Infinite, the Immortal. And from this root has come the whole of this universe; and so, the universe is also sacred. Because it has come from the Infinite, this universe is also very holy and sacred. Therefore, we call it *samsāra vṛkṣa* as well as *brahma vṛkṣa*. We speak of it using both these terms. That is why we understand the greatness of the world in which we live after understanding the root of this tree. A seed contains the entire possibility of a mighty tree. In the seed it is invisible. But once it develops as the tree, we find myriads of its manifestations—branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, and fruits, etc. So also, it is just the same with the universe. The universe has come from one Brahman in a process of cosmic evolution, and we find such diversity in the manifested universe. But, do not be frightened, for, behind this multiplicity, there is a unity. From the One the many has come and unto the One will the many return also. In this way, a high philosophy developed and to illustrate it for easy comprehension, our sages took these examples like the *aśvattha vṛkṣa*.

Evolution takes place from the subtle to the gross, from the gross to still more gross, until we come to this world of sensory experience of touch and sound. The first is extremely subtle; the first product of evolution, Vedanta says, is the *mahat* or cosmic mind. Then came all the *tattvas.* Out of that came, one by one, the starry systems and living organisms. There is an order in this evolution of the universe from the primordial stuff. This picture of the universe as a tree sounds very interesting and is philosophically very significant. So, in Vedanta, this respect for the manifested world is there. But we respect it only so long as we connect it with the root. If we take it away from the root, it becomes an evil meant to be overcome. So, in this *Gītā,* this tree as the *samsāra vṛkṣa* is treated as something to be overcome, because we treat it as apart from the root, apart from Brahman. It has no value, and therefore, we have to cut it down, as the *Gītā* will say in a later verse (15. 3): cut it by what?, not by any material instrument, but by a spirit of detachment. With absolute non-attachment we cut off this tree and become free. That is the verse which is coming hereafter.

As Brahman, we cannot cut off this tree. It is very real; it is holy, and sacred. If we have that attitude, then there is no need to cut off this tree. The tree that we have conjured up as self-existing, self-sufficient, has no right to exist; we need to develop detachment and cut off that tree. But once we open our eyes to the truth of that tree, that the tree is the product of that root which is Brahman, that everything comes from that Brahman, and that what comes from the root is verily the root, what comes from Brahman is verily Brahman, then the tree need not be cut off. That teaching is there in Vedanta: *Brahmaivedam amṛtam: idam* or 'this manifested universe'; *amṛtam brahma eva, '*is the immortal Brahman only'. Śrī Kṛṣṇa started this chapter with this beautiful imagery of the *aśvattha* tree and all the leaves of the tree which nourish the tree. These leaves are considered as the Vedas which contain teachings of what is right and what is wrong, how to overcome the wrong and realize the truth.

अधश्चोर्ध्वं प्रसृतास्तस्य शाखाः
गुणप्रवृद्धा विषयप्रवालाः।
अधश्च मूलान्यनुसन्ततानि

कर्मानुबन्धीनि मनुष्यलोके॥२॥

Adhaścordhvam prasṛtāstasya śākhāḥ
guṇapravṛddhā viṣayapravālāḥ;
Adhaśca mūlānyanusantatāni
karmānubandhīni maṇuṣya loke — 15. 2

'Below and above spread its branches which are nourished by the *guṇas* and which have sense-objects as its buds; and below, in the human world, stretch forth the roots, originating action.'

The branches of this tree have spread out both above and below; there is this terrestrial world which is represented by branches branching out below; there are also the celestial worlds, stretching above. All these—branches above, branches below—have come spreading out from that one root, the tap root, which is Brahman, of the nature of pure Consciousness; *prasṛtāḥ* means 'spread out'; *adhaścordhvam,* 'below and above'; *tasya śākhāḥ,* 'its branches'; *guṇapravṛddhāḥ,* 'they are all strengthened by the three *guṇas*', *sattva, rajas,* and *tamas*. The whole manifestation—as the previous chapter has told us—is nothing but a play of the three *guṇas* in various ratios. *Viṣayapravālāḥ,* 'the sense-objects are the fine tips of the leaf system'. *Adhaśca mūlānyanusantatāni,* and, 'below there are also the new roots', the secondary roots coming down. The main root is up; but, here there are these secondary roots which come as a result of human *samskāras* or tendencies, actions, and their results. They come as secondary roots. *Karmānubandhīni*, 'born out of our own actions', *maṇuṣya loke,* 'in the human world.' That is the picture of the world as a mighty *aśvattha* tree.

न रूपमस्येह तथोपलभ्यते
नान्तो न चादिर्न च सम्प्रतिष्ठा।
अश्वत्थमेनं सुविरूढमूल-
मसङ्गशस्त्रेण दृढेन छित्त्वा॥३॥

Na rūpamasyeha tathopalabhyate
nānto na cādirna ca sampratiṣṭhā;
Aśvatthamenam suvirūḍhamūlam

asaṅgaśastreṇa dṛḍhena chittvā — 15. 3

'Its form is not here perceived as such, neither its end, nor its origin, nor its existence. Having cut asunder this firm-rooted *Aśvattha* with the strong axe of non-attachment …'

One cannot understand the form of this tree easily. In one look we cannot understand it, for it is so vast. *Rūpam,* 'form'; *iha,* 'in this world'; *na upalabhyate,* 'it is not possible to grasp'. If we try to give a full account of the universe, even using astronomy, it is impossible. It is so vast and varied. *Nānto na cādirna ca sampratiṣṭhā,* 'it has no end, it has no beginning, nor do we know how it is getting stabilised here'; we do not know how or on what it is based. We cannot understand this; the world is a mysterious entity. Even to the greatest scientists it is a mystery today. It is *The Mysterious Universe*, according to Sir James Jeans. *Aśvatthamenam suvirūḍhamūlam,* 'this mighty firm-rooted *aśvattha* tree'; *dṛḍhena chittvā,* 'firmly cutting it down'; how?, with a sharp weapon of course, and what is that sharp weapon?, *asaṅgaśastreṇa,* 'by the weapon of non-attachment', by turning the mind: 'I want the truth of the whole tree'. And what is that truth?, Brahman. Here, in this world, everything is constantly changing, dying and being born. That is the nature of the world. I want to see that supreme truth behind this tree, that truth which sustains the whole of this universe. If that is so, then get detached from this mighty tree. And that detachment is treated as a sword. We want the root and not these manifestations which are but temporary. Leaves come and go; branches come and go; trees come and go. But, that One remains. As the British poet Shelley has put it in his poem: 'The One remains, the many change and pass.' We want to know that truth.

ततः पदं तत्परिमार्गितव्यं
यस्मिन्गता न निवर्तन्ति भूयः।
तमेव चाद्यं पुरुषं प्रपद्ये
यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृता पुराणी॥४॥

Tataḥ padam tat parimārgitavyam
yasmingatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ;

Tameva cādyam puruṣam prapadye
yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇī — 15. 4

'Then that goal is to be sought for, going where they (the wise) do not return again. I seek refuge in that Primeval *Puruṣa* whence streamed forth the Eternal Activity, cosmic processes.'

Tataḥ padam tat parimārgitavyam, 'we must achieve that supreme state of Brahman behind this world'. *Tat* means that Brahman. Behind the many is the One. We must realize that truth. *Yasmingatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ,* 'attaining which there is no more rebirth'. We are then ever free; we have realized our own infinite nature—becoming one with Brahman. *Tameva cādyam puruṣam prapadye: tam eva ādyam puruṣam,* 'that primordial Person alone'; *prapadye*, 'I shall attain'. *Tam eva* means 'That alone' I shall attain; *yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇī,* 'from which issued this universe in ancient times'.

Sri Ramakrishna asked a disciple of his, 'Do you see any visions? Do you see any light in your meditation?' 'Yes, I see a light,' said the disciple. And Sri Ramakrishna said, 'that is very fine'. But, the disciple said, 'I don't like it.' 'Then what do you want,' asked Sri Ramakrishna. 'I want the Source from which that light comes,' said the disciple. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'O, that is a wonderful thing. But, you have to wait for it.' The disciple continued, 'I am prepared to wait for it'.

Tam eva cādyam puruṣam, 'that primordial Puruṣa alone'; *prapadye*, 'one will attain'; *yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇi,* 'from whom the whole universe has flowed', like a river flowing from a mighty gorge, like the Ganges flowing from Gomukh or Gangotri*; purāṇī,* 'from ancient times'. Vedanta calls this world *anādi*, beginningless. That is a wonderful idea. Go back in time as far as you can, and still you find it there. Today's astronomy says that several million years ago the cosmos began. And after another many million years it will go back also. That is the language. But, when it goes back, it remains in seed form. Again it will come out for another manifestation. In this way, the universe is always there, punctuated by *śṛṣṭi* or creation, *sthiti* or maintenance, and *samhāra* or dissolution. These are the three aspects of everything in the universe: they come out, stay and then go away. Nothing is permanent here. It is so with the entire universe. It has no

permanence. It is like a wave in an ocean. Brahman is that ocean; the wave is the universe that has come from Brahman. The waves subside in the ocean and then comes other waves. That is how the world is described by Vedanta. This must be our attitude, says the *Gītā:* 'I shall achieve union with that Divine Reality from which this universe has been flowing for ages.' *Tam eva cādyam puruṣam prapadye. Ádyam puruṣam* means 'primordial Puruṣa', beyond which there is nothing: *sā kāṣṭhā sā parā gatiḥ* as the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says(I. iii. 11), 'that is the supreme State, the supreme Goal'. 'I will realize That'. That kind of development of mind and heart must come to achieve this, as the *Gītā* says in the next verse:

निर्मानमोहा जितसङ्गदोषा
अध्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामाः।
द्वन्द्वैर्विमुक्ताः सुखदुःखसंज्ञै-
र्गच्छन्त्यमूढाः पदमव्ययं तत्॥५॥

Nirmānamohā jitasaṅgadoṣā
adhyātmanityā vinivṛttakāmāḥ;
Dvandvairvimuktāḥ sukhaduḥkhasamjñaiḥ
gacchantyamūḍhāḥ padamavyayam tat — 15. 5

'Free from pride and delusion, with the evil of attachment conquered, ever dwelling in the Self, with sensory desires completely receded, liberated from the pairs of opposites known as pleasure and pain, the undeluded reach that Goal Eternal.'

Nirmānamohā, 'without *māna* and *moha*'*; nir* indicates negative, i.e. getting rid of; *māna* means 'pride or arrogance', and *moha* is 'delusion'. *Jitasaṅgadoṣā,* 'with the evil of attachment conquered'; *jita* means 'conquered', *saṅgadoṣā* means 'evil of attachment'. *Adhyātmanityā* 'ever practising awareness of the Atman'; I am the Self, ever pure, a spark of the Divine—that attitude; *vinivṛttakāmāḥ,* 'all outgoing cravings have been overcome'; *dvandvairvimuktāḥ,* 'having freed oneself from the clutches of the pairs of opposites'. Pleasure and pain, happiness and suffering—they are called pairs of opposites. These have been overcome. *Sukhaduḥkhasamjñaiḥ,* 'known as *sukha* or joy and *duḥkha* or suffering'.

Amūḍhāḥ, 'those who become free from *mauḍhyā* or delusion'; *gacchanti,* 'they reach'; *padam avyayam tat,* 'that imperishable state' of Brahman.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling here that we human beings, as products of that cosmic evolution over millions and millions of years, *have the organic capacity to take up this process of evolution into our own hands, and direct it towards that primordial state*. Nothing, neither the sun nor the animals, can do that. A human being has that capacity to ask that fundamental question: 'Where did I come from? How can I reach there?' We have that capacity and therefore the sages exercised that capacity, realized that truth, and told it to humanity in the Vedas. There you find a profound truth about all humanity. Physically speaking, human beings are specks of dust as it were in our cosmos. I think that it was the French scientist Blaise Pascal who said: 'In space, the universe engulfs us and reduces us to a pin point; but through thought, we embrace that universe'. But, inwardly there is something infinite about him or her.

How does the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* define Brahman? *Satyam-jñānam-anantam brahma*, 'Brahman is *satyam* or truth, *jñānam* or pure Consciousness, *anantam* or infinite'. That is the nature of Brahman from which the flow of this universe has come. That is the Vedantic idea. So, as a human being, we can understand that we have the organic capacity to study and discover the whole world, to study the 'tree' and also the *root* of the tree. We now study the tree, but how few search for and grasp the root of the tree! But it is the root that nourishes the whole tree. Let us go to the root. *And the ancient Indian mind took up this challenge, dived inwards and discovered that One behind the many*. 'I am also a part of that Infinite Reality'. The seventh verse will tell us that we are sparks of that one infinite Brahman from which the universe has come. When we become free from delusion, we reach that supreme imperishable state.

न तद्भासयते सूर्यो न शशाङ्को न पावकः।
यद्गत्वा न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम॥६॥

Na tadbhāsayate sūryo na śaśāṅko na pāvakaḥ;
Yat gatvā na nivartante taddhāma paramam mama — 15. 6

‘That the sun illumines not, nor the moon, nor fire; that is My Supreme Abode, going whither they return not.’

A beautiful illustration is given. *Tat mama paramam dhāma,* ‘That supreme state which is My own state,’ says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. As an incarnation, ‘that is My real state’. Now, that state is self-illumined. It is *sakṛt vibhātam,* ‘always illumined’. Out of that illumination comes the luminosity of the sun, the moon, the stars, and everything. *Na tadbhāsayate sūryo,* ‘the sun does not illumine that Reality’; *na śaśāṅko,* ‘nor the moon’; *śaśa aṅka,* ‘the mark of a rabbit’; it looks as if there is a rabbit inside the moon. *Na pāvakaḥ*, ‘nor does the fire’ illumine it; *yat gatvā na nivartante,* ‘by attaining which we do not have to return to the world of birth and death’; *tat dhāma paramam mama,* ‘That is My supreme state.’ *Dhāma* means ‘home’ or abode.

This idea has been expressed in many Upaniṣads. Brahman is the Light of all lights. No light can illumine it. The light of the sun is a flimsy light compared to the Light of the Atman. It is called *jyotiṣām jyotiḥ,* ‘the Light of all lights’. And that is put in a beautiful verse in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (II. ii. 15):

Na tatra sūryo bhāti na candra tārakam
nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto’yam agniḥ;
Tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam
tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti —

Na tatra sūryo bhāti, ‘there the sun does not illumine’; *na candra tārakam,* ‘nor the moon nor the stars’; *nemā vidyuto bhānti*, ‘nor does these lightnings illumine that truth’; *kuto’yam agniḥ,* ‘what to speak of this fire in the household!’ *tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam,* ‘That shines and the whole world shines after It’; *tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti,* ‘by Its Light this whole manifested universe is lighted.’ And that is the Light that shines in you, in me and in all beings as pure Consciousness.

We forget that light and behave in a strange way without knowing that profound truth. When that truth about the infinite Light of the Atman is known, life becomes completely different. In every mystical literature, the word Light is used to describe the soul and God. The Persian word *nūr*

means light. This Light is the Light of truth, the Light of God. None likes darkness; we all like to go to light. That is the nature of human quest. So, these little lights are there to light up our day-to-day life. A little more light is there to light up our minds. But the realization of that Truth alone lights up life completely. 'That is My Supreme Abode', says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. You reach there by the realization of this Light of all lights.

Then comes a great teaching.

ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूत: सनातन:।
मन:षष्ठानीन्द्रियाणि प्रकृतिस्थानि कर्षति॥७॥

Mamaivāmśo jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ;
Manaḥṣaṣṭhāni indriyāṇi prakṛtisthāni karṣati — 15. 7

'An eternal portion of Myself, having become a living soul in the world of the living, draws (to itself) from external nature, the (five) senses with mind for the sixth.'

The status of a human being has never been expressed so highly in any literature compared to what we get in Vedanta and in this verse of the *Gītā. Mamaivāmśo,* i.e. *mama eva amśo,* 'a little aspect of Myself alone'; *eva* here means 'verily'; there is no cause for doubt. And that aspect which is *sanātanaḥ,* 'eternal'; *jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ,* 'has become embodied in this human body in the world of the embodied'. That is the nature of this embodied being; he or she is eternal and can never die. That which illumines and animates the body is called the *jīva.* The word genetic has come from the same Sanskrit root. 'I have Myself entered into all these living beings as a spark of the Divine', says Śri Kṛṣṇa, 'and yet, I am not divided. The undivided *appears* to be divided'; that is all. The *Gītā* will say later on, 'just like the undivided space'. You build a hall and you have cut the space into a small hall. Space does not know of such divisions. You think that you have divided space. Space can never be divided.

Manaḥ ṣaṣṭhāni indriyāṇi prakṛtisthāni karṣati, 'that little spark within draws to itself the mind and the five sense organs'. *Indriyāṇi* is 'sense organs'; *ṣaṣṭhāni* means 'six'; meaning the five sense organs of perception and the mind. It draws these to itself and becomes an embodied human

being. This is the *sūkṣma śarīra,* the subtle body in the human being. That subtle body lives in a gross body. In this subtle body there is the *jīva,* the principle of intelligence.

In the Upaniṣads alone will you get this profound truth proclaimed in the strongest language. Most mystics—Christian, Sufi and of other religions—have also spoken about this. But the earliest exposition of this which has influenced all other spiritual seekers, appeared in the Upaniṣads. The discovery of the Atman is the discovery of a very wonderful truth—that in this tiny body, such a profound truth is hidden. So, the Upaniṣads addressed all human beings as *amṛtasya putrāḥ,* 'children of immortality'. Body is a child of mortality, but the human being is the child of immortality. Nowhere else will you find this high status discovered about the human being, and proclaimed in such powerful language. Never forget your Divine inheritance. You are essentially Divine. Swami Vivekananda gave the sum and substance of Vedanta in a few sentences. The first one is: 'Each soul is potentially Divine.' And he added, 'the goal of life is to manifest this Divine within.' Divinity is there, but it is not manifest. It cannot do any service or help to you unless you manifest it. Fire is there in the ashes, but you cannot cook your food on it. You have to separate the ashes, put a little faggot into it; then fire will manifest and we can cook our food. So also here. To have the Atman within as my true nature is not enough; I must realize this truth. I am the Atman, eternally free, eternally pure. That is my true nature. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling us this truth. The whole of Vedanta preaches us this central truth: *Each soul is potentially Divine*. We can manifest this Divinity. We have the organic capacity for it; only we do not utilize it; and so we remain as a creature on this earth. We are not meant to be creatures. We are meant to be free. Freedom is our birthright. *No literature speaks so high about human freedom as Vedanta*. Are you free? That is the main question. Don't be bound, don't be a creature to be shaped by external forces. That is the meaning of the word 'creature'. All other species are creatures. Men and women are also mostly creatures. But it need not be so; the human being can change it. We can take this life into our hands and shape it. We have that freedom. Realize that freedom, apply it, and become free. *That is all the central message of Vedanta to all humanity*. It has nothing to do with creeds and dogmas. You can test and verify this

grand truth in your life and say: I am free, I am free. When Bhagavan Buddha realized this truth, he exclaimed: 'I am enlightened, I am free, I am free.'

That little spark within draws to itself the mind and the five sense organs which are *prakṛtisthāni,* 'abiding in *prakṛti*'; *manas* or mind and the five sense organs 'are all products of nature', being composed of the three *guṇas*. *Karṣati* means *ākarṣati,* 'it attracts' to itself; then it becomes a limited human being. That divine spark becomes conditioned by this psychophysical mechanism within and becomes a limited human being. Thus it forgets its own higher nature.

Behind this gross body there is a *sūkṣma śarīra*, subtle body, and a *kāraṇa śarīra,* a causal body which is extremely subtle; and the causal and the subtle bodies go together. So, when death takes place, what happens? They discovered that the gross physical body alone is shed at the time of death. The subtle body continues; its dying time is not the same as that of the physical body. It is very subtle, and so it seeks a new body and reincarnates to continue its evolution toward fulfilment or perfection. This is what happened in our ancient development of thought. *The discovery of the subtle body made for the great theory of reincarnation* which is so accepted by all of us in India from our very birth. This idea of reincarnation, as I have said earlier in the sixth chapter (vol. 2, p. 169) quoting a modern book: *Reincarnation: An East-West Anthology*—compiled by S. L. Cranston, published by Julian Press, New York—is a widespread belief all over the world. All my desires are not satisfied here and so I get another chance, and so on. In this way, *aneka janma samsiddhaḥ,* 'attaining to various births', finally we come to the realisation of the supreme truth and achievement of the goal of human evolution in the last life which is attained *here and now, and not in a far-away heaven*. That is how we have to manipulate human life and human actions.

We attain this by first drawing all these subtle elements like the *indriyas* or sense organs, and *manas* or the mind to ourselves and becoming a limited human being. Then what happens?

शरीरं यदवाप्नोति यच्चाप्युत्क्रामतीश्वरः।
गृहीत्वैतानि संयाति वायुर्गन्धानिवाशयात्॥८॥

Śarīram yadavāpnoti yaccāpyutkrāmatīśvaraḥ;
Gṛhītvaitāni samyāti vāyurgandhānivāśayāt — 15. 8

'When the Lord obtains a human body and when He leaves it, He takes these senses and mind and goes, as the wind takes the scents from their seats (the flowers).'

Here the language used for the *jīva* or soul is *Æśvara* the Lord. From the *Æśvara* comes the *jīva*; it is also *Æśvara,* but it has lost its *Æśvara*-hood by this limitation. It is like a hypnotism from which we are suffering. That is why Swami Vivekananda said that true religion is not hypnotism; it is de-hypnotism. We are hypnotized into thinking we are the body. That is pure hypnotism. We are not the body; we are *in* the body. That is the one truth we must realize. Then we can detach ourselves and try to realize our own true nature as the immortal Atman.

Śarīram yadavāpnoti, 'when the *jīva* attains a human body' at the time of birth, or *yaccāpyutkrāmati,* 'when he or she gives up the body' at the time of death. *Utkrāmati* means 'going out'. *Æśvaraḥ,* 'this *Æśvara* or *jīva* within' which is an *amśa* or a part of the Divine; *gṛhītvaitāni samyāti,* when he or she disappears from this body, 'he or she goes away carrying all these subtle elements' like the *manas, indriyas*, etc.; as a subtle body he or she moves out for other pastures, other experiences. How?, an example is given: like *vāyurgandhān iva āśayāt; āśaya* means 'the source', i.e. a flower from which beautiful waves of *gandha* or 'good smell' come out; and the *vāyu* or 'air' carries it. The smell is borne from here to there, but the air is unconnected with it. It merely carries the smell—this rare smell coming from the flowers. Similarly, the energies of these sense organs are taken in the subtle body for experiencing life in a new manifestation. This is what is called rebirth or reincarnation.

श्रोत्रं चक्षुः स्पर्शनं च रसनं घ्राणमेव च।
अधिष्ठाय मनश्चायं विषयानुपसेवते॥९॥

Śrotram cakṣuḥ sparśanam ca rasanam ghrāṇameva ca;
Adhiṣṭhāya manaścāyam viṣayān upasevate — 15. 9

'Presiding over the ear, the eye, the sense of touch, of taste, and of smell, as also the mind, He experiences sense objects.'

Having got into this body, we enjoy this world through the five sense organs and the *manas.* What are the five sense organs? They are: *śrotram,* 'the ear'; *cakṣuḥ,* 'the eye'; *sparśanam,* 'the sense of touch'; *rasanam,* 'tongue that tastes'; *ghrāṇameva ca,* 'and also the smell'—these are the five doors of perception for us to experience the world; and *adhiṣṭhāya manaśca,* 'based also on the *manas* or mind'. Mind is the co-ordinator of the five sense organs of perception. These constitute the subtle body. It is actually the subtle body that enjoys, and not the gross body. We put food into the stomach; the stomach does not enjoy it. Only the subtle body enjoys it; your mind enjoys it, your sense organs enjoy it, and not the body itself. *Viṣayān upasevate,* 'it enjoys sense objects', with this equipment that we have got for ourselves. Having confirmed a previous experience in a previous body, we left it and carried it over to this body, thus experiencing the world life after life, till we are fed up with it and our minds are turned to the infinite Atman. Then the subtle body will not feel the need for any more of these experiences. It realises that it is ever full. When we are full in stomach, we don't search for food. Because we are empty we search for food. Our mind is empty and therefore we search for sense objects. When the mind is full, we don't search for things at all. That state is called perfection. That is *mukti* or *mokṣa.* Everybody is a candidate for it; it is a human privilege. *It is the goal of human evolution or of evolution at the human stage*. Only some people do not try to utilize that privilege. They are satisfied to remain as a creature acted upon by various forces outside, as also by his or her own innate tendencies or *vāsanas* within.

उत्क्रामन्तं स्थितं वापि भुञ्जानं वा गुणान्वितम्।
विमूढा नानुपश्यन्ति पश्यन्ति ज्ञानचक्षुषः॥१०॥

Utkrāmantam sthitam vāpi bhuñjānam vā guṇānvitam;
Vimūḍhā nānupaśyanti paśyanti jñānacakṣuṣaḥ — 15. 10

‘While transmigrating (from one body to another), or residing (in the same) experiencing sense objects, or when united with the *guṇas*—the deluded do not see him; but those who have the eye of wisdom behold him.’

This is a beautiful verse. I quoted this verse in my letter to Sir Julian Huxley in reply to his letter on my book: *Message of the Upanishads* (Appendix II, p. 569): ‘We cannot accept reincarnation,’ he had written in that letter. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* this subject comes. I had quoted it there. He had read it. His contention was: ‘Our science cannot accept reincarnation’. We can accept that there is something surviving the death of the body, but that it takes another body is not acceptable because there is no genetic continuity. The scientists accept only the genetic system. A father has assigned a genetic packet to his son and thus it goes on. And so we accept survival. But science cannot accept reincarnation. I replied to him explaining the whole thing and quoted this particular verse: When the soul or *jīva* leaves this body, or when the soul lives in the body and enjoys the various sense objects composed of the three *guṇas*, we can see that the soul is there experiencing all this. But for that you must have a *jñānacakṣu,* ‘the Eye of Knowledge’. With these gross eyes you cannot see this truth. In all physical sciences we use the gross physical eyes, the fleshy eyes helped by the mind; but when we develop a *jñānacakṣu* and thereby penetrate nature and discover the truth that is hidden there, we become capable to comprehend this Truth. That this table or chair is composed of various particles like protons, electrons, and so on, is a truth that is not given to us by our fleshy eye. That is given by the *jñānacakṣu.* Some penetrating eye you must have, and that is indispensable in science.

Continue the same development, the same training, still more. We can then go still deeper. Then you will discover: Here is a self within. It goes on living here in the body, enjoying all this. You will be able to discover this truth when you have that *jñānacakṣu. Vimūḍhā nānupaśyanti,* ‘the deluded people cannot see this truth’. They see only the external and nothing else. They cannot penetrate. *Paśyanti jñānacakṣuṣaḥ,* ‘those who have *jñānacakṣu* see this truth’. That is the challenge about this particular subject. This subject is being investigated all over the world today. In America there are so many organizations dealing with the subject of rebirth and reincarnation. Data are being collected. No conclusive evidence has

come only because none of this can be understood by external study. When the mind becomes extremely subtle, it develops the capacity to penetrate this gross body and see what is going on in the subtle body—see the *jiva* coming into this world, enjoying, and going from this world. The *jñānacakṣu* can see this, not the *vimūḍhāḥ,* the deluded eye or mind of a person.

Vedanta calls the physical body as *sthūla śarīra*, the gross body. Inside is a *sūkṣma śarīra*, a subtle or finer body which consists of the entire inner world of thoughts, feelings and memories—known in Sanskrit as *samskārās* or *vāsanās*. This subtle body is what is known as soul in English and *jiva* in Sanskrit. It was an insight into this subtle body that gave to the ancient Indian sages the truth of survival and reincarnation. That this truth has been held widely by an impressive section of humanity is revealed to us by the book mentioned before in chapter six: *Reincarnation: An East-West Anthology*. The announcement on the cover flap reads:

'Reincarnation is frequently regarded as an oriental concept incompatible with Western thinking and traditional belief. The present encyclopaedic compilation of quotations from eminent philosophers, theologians, poets, scientists, etc., of every period of Western culture, and the thoroughly documented survey of Reincarnation in world religions, will serve to correct this error in thinking.

'This anthology deals with a subject which many philosophers have called the central issue of our time—the question of man's immortality.'

The announcement ends with the following comments of James Freeman Clarke:

'It would be curious if we should find science and philosophy taking up again the old theory of metempsychosis, remodelling it to suit our present modes of religious and scientific thought, and launching it again on the wide ocean of human belief. But stranger things have happened in the history of human opinion.'

In the preface to the book the compilers state:

'Although a surprising number of distinguished thinkers of every period of history have either championed or on occasion favourably considered the

idea of repeated existences upon earth, as this *Anthology* attests, such testimony hardly establishes reincarnation as a fact. It does suggest, however, that an idea that has occupied so many exceptional minds cannot be lightly dismissed, but is worthy of questioning, study, and investigation.'

At the time of death something disappears; nothing material disappears, but something extremely subtle disappears. Even when we are alive in the body, that reality is there within all of us. We are enjoying various pleasures and experiences in life composed of the three *guṇas.* In that also that reality is there. This is understood by the *jñānacakṣu*, one who has got a very subtle perception. Some of our modern Western neurologists have very subtle minds; they are able to detect something more than mere neurons and neuronal activity. Similarly, here, *vimūḍhāḥ na anupaśyanti,* 'those who are gross-minded will not be able to see this truth'. But when you become extremely subtle in mind, you will be able to discover this truth. I am sure that, in the coming decades, these wonderful insights of Vedanta will become well established through scientific procedure. Not that mere physical science can prove this thing, but science can show that without that assumption, none of these experiences can be explained. Physical science cannot directly prove either the mind or the Atman. But physical science can say that it cannot explain human nervous behaviour without positing *something* beyond the physical entity called the brain. That much conviction has come already to a few scientists. Many more will come to it. A big search is on in this particular field. That is the importance of verse 10.

यतन्तो योगिनश्चैनं पश्यन्त्यात्मन्यवस्थितम्।
यतन्तोऽप्यकृतात्मानो नैनं पश्यन्त्यचेतसः॥११॥

Yatanto yoginaścainam paśyantyātmanyavasthitam;
Yatanto'pyakṛtātmāno nainam paśyantyacetasaḥ — 15. 11

'The *yogīs* striving (for perfection) behold Him dwelling in oneself; but the unrefined and unintelligent, even though striving, see Him not.'

Yatanto, 'those who struggle', who work hard to understand this truth; *yoginaḥ,* such '*yogīs*'; *paśyanti,* 'realize'; *ātmani avasthitam,* 'this truth of the Self dwelling in oneself'. *Yoginaḥ ca enam,* 'those who are *yogīs* in

search of spiritual truth'; anyone who is in search of spiritual truth is a *yogī.* Any scientist who is in search of the truths of material nature can also be called a *yogī* in a wider sense, because physical science is also the same search for truth, either internally or externally. That is also truth, this is also truth. But specifically the term *yogī* refers to the people who search for the truth of the spiritual dimension of the human personality. *Enam* means 'this truth', the Atman. *Paśyanti ātmānam avasthitam,* means 'see established in one's own self'; here, within the body-mind complex that reality is there. That truth is revealed to the *yogī* who is endeavouring and struggling to understand this truth. *Akṛtātmāno,* but 'those whose minds are not attuned to *yoga*' are able to handle only physical things and not something higher; such people, *yatanto'pi,* 'even if they strive'; *na enam paśyanti,* 'does not realize this truth of the Atman' behind the body; *acetasaḥ,* 'because their minds are not fully attuned' to this truth, and therefore they see only the external things.

यदादित्यगतं तेजो जगद्भासयतेऽखिलम्।
यच्चन्द्रमसि यच्चाग्नौ तत्तेजो विद्धि मामकम्॥१२॥

Yadādityagatam tejo jagadbhāsayate'khilam;
Yaccandramasi yaccāgnau tattejo viddhi māmakam —15. 12

'The light which, residing in the sun, illuminates the whole world, that also which is in the moon and in the fire—know that light to be Mine.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa as that supreme Divine Consciousness, universal and non-dual, and identifying Himself as an *avatāra* or Incarnation, is telling in this verse as follows. *Yat ādityagatam tejo jagat bhāsayate akhilam,* 'the light of the sun which illumines every nook and corner of the whole solar system'. The rays of the sun can penetrate even into inaccessible caves. That is the nature of this solar energy radiation. Similarly, *yat candramasi yat ca agnau,* 'and also whatever is there in the moon and in the fire'; these are also luminous substances; *tat tejo viddhi māmakam,* remember that 'all of them derive their luminosity from Me', the infinite Pure Consciousness. The most luminous thing, self-luminous, is Pure Consciousness. The light of the sun comes from material processes occurring within the sun. It is not its own, and therefore the sun will die one day—heat death, as we call it.

When all the hydrogen in the sun will be converted into energy and will be thrown out of the world, the sun will no more be sun at all. Therefore, we have its light, *temporarily*. But here is the Light of all lights, the Infinite Atman. Brahman is described in the Upaniṣads as *jyotiṣām jyotiḥ,* 'the Light of all lights'. That is the truth about this matter, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa when he says, 'I am that Light'. This is the idea. In the fourth gospel of St. John we find this statement: 'He is the Light, the Light that lighteth every soul that cometh into the world.' This is a beautiful Vedantic expression. The Light which lighteth every soul that cometh into the world is the light of the Divine. From the infinite Consciousness which I am, these lights have radiated to illumine all objects.

गामाविश्य च भूतानि धारयाम्यहमोजसा।
पुष्णामि चौषधी: सर्वा: सोमो भूत्वा रसात्मक:॥१३॥

Gāmāviśya ca bhūtāni dhārayāmyahamojasā;
Puṣṇāmi cauṣadhīḥ sarvāḥ somo bhūtvā rasātmakaḥ—15. 13

'Entering the earth with My energy, I support all beings, and I nourish all the herbs, becoming the watery moon.'

That same reality which is infinite Consciousness enters into the earth, and there, *bhūtāni dhārayāmi aham,* 'I sustain all beings'; *ojasā,* 'through My Energy'; *puṣṇāmi cauṣadhīḥ sarvāḥ,* 'all plants and herbs I nourish with that Energy'. Entering into the earth, I sustain all beings through that *ojas*. All things are provided by the earth, but the energy for it comes ultimately from that one infinite Source. The Source of all energy in the world is God Himself. Therefore, we call it *parāśakti, ādyāśakti*, 'Highest Energy, Primordial Energy'. We have beautiful expressions like these in our Vedantic literature for that Energy. Also this energy nourishes all herbs and the watery moon. The moon is considered to be a watery entity according to the old ideas. It looks solid, but it has specially the element of watery nature associated with it. This is an old belief. And the moon has something to do with nourishing the plants. Everything in nature is interconnected is thus understood. So, this is one of the conceptions in Indian thought. *Puṣṇāmi,* 'I nourish', give *puṣṭi* or nourishment. *The main theme is: that wonderful Reality is not only transcendent but also immanent.* That infinite Reality is

present in nature as well as in the human being. Therefore, finally Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses the most concrete expression in the following verse: We eat food and we digest it. We take the essence of that food to build up our body, and we throw away the waste matter. What is the means of that digestion? Áyurveda calls it *jaṭharāgni,* 'the fire of digestion'. Now, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is saying that that *jaṭharāgni* in all beings which digests all the four types of food—food that is eaten, drunk, licked or swallowed—is Himself. It is His Energy that is in our digestive system making for the digestion of food. And thus, so concrete is the expression of that reality. We live in and through Him every minute. That is the Vedantic idea of that reality—not something outside the universe before which one is to stand in awe. Not at all. He is *otaḥ protam* in this universe. This is a beautiful expression in Sanskrit. *Otaḥprotam* means 'warp and woof'. What is a piece of cloth?, it is warp and woof. Similarly, this Brahman is called the warp and woof of the universe. And in this case also, whenever anyone digests food and says, 'I am digesting it', it is He who manifests Himself as that digestive energy or metabolic energy in the system. That is developed further in the next verse.

अहं वैश्वानरो भूत्वा प्राणिनां देहमाश्रितः।
प्राणापानसमायुक्तः पचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधम्॥१४॥

Aham vaiśvānaro bhūtvā prāṇinām dehamāśritaḥ;
Prāṇāpānasamāyuktaḥ pacāmyannam caturvidham—15. 14

'Abiding in the body of living beings as (the fire) *Vaiśvānara,* I, associated with *prāṇa* and *apāna,* digest the fourfold food.'

I, becoming the *vaiśvānara* or fire in this human body, *prāṇinām dehamāśritaḥ*, 'get into the human body'; *prāṇāpāna samāyuktaḥ,* and 'conjoined with *prāṇa* and *apāna*'; *pacāmi annam,* 'I digest food' that one takes; *pac* means 'to digest', 'to burn', or 'to cook'; *caturvidham,* 'which is of four types'. The four types of food we take are the food that we chew, drink, swallow, and lick. Eating is a sacred act. The one idea that comes from Vedanta is that there is nothing secular; everything is sacred, everything is divine. The opposite of it is what we find today: nothing is sacred, nothing is holy; everything is drab and secular. That is the extremely modern idea. But, this *Gītā* idea will appeal to people because there is truth

in saying that this solar energy comes in the form of our food and our digestive fire. And solar energy itself comes from the Divine. So, the transformation of that Divine Energy into all these forms is expressed here by taking the act of eating as an instance. You must understand that it applies to all life situations. There is only one energy source, and that is God Himself. Everything comes out of Him and manifests as the growth of plants, flowers, fruits, as seasons, etc. Plants have some seasons for bearing flowers and fruits. There is nothing secular in Vedantic language. Everything is spiritual, whether we know it or not. It is good for us to know that it is spiritual. That is the Indian concept. We do not have a separate secularism. That is the great teaching in the Upaniṣads—*Brahmaivedam amṛtam,* 'that immortal Brahman is all this manifested universe'. Once you realize that the whole universe is Brahman, then everything is sacred, everything is holy. This is the attitude: how to make life holy and sacred. Today we have gone too far in the direction of destroying all meaning, all beauty, all divinity and holiness from life. Now, we have to bring back a little of the original spirit. There is something holy, something divine. There are many people in the West who are taking to this attitude, divinizing life itself. Therefore, this particular sentence has great relevance today.

सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि सन्निविष्टो
मत्तः स्मृतिर्ज्ञानमपोहनं च।
वेदैश्च सर्वैरहमेव वेद्यो
वेदान्तकृद्वेदविदेव चाहम्॥१५॥

Sarvasya cāham hṛdi sanniviṣṭo
mattaḥ smṛtiḥ jñānam apohanam ca;
Vedaiśca sarvaiḥ ahameva vedyo
vedāntakṛt vedavideva cāham — 15. 15

'I am centred in the hearts of all; memory and perception as well as their loss come from Me. I am verily that which has to be known by all the Vedas; I indeed am the Author of the Vedanta, and Knower of the Veda am I.'

In this verse Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'I am the Self in all beings'. *Sarvasya cāham hṛdi sanniviṣṭo,* 'I have established Myself in the hearts of all beings'; of all beings, not only human, but also in the hearts of the non-human species. *Mattaḥ smṛtiḥ jñānam apohanam ca,* 'it is from Me that you get the varying experiences of *smṛti* or "memory", *jñāna* or "perception", and *apohana* or "loss of memory"'; not only the good but also the bad comes from the same divine source. Since only One is there, even the bad must be attributed to that One. Memory, perception, and forgetfulness, all come from that one source only. We do not have two sources, one for good and the other for evil, namely, the devil. The nearest explanation to grasp this truth is what we get in the solar system: that everything in the solar system is traced to solar radiation. We have beautiful flowers and delicious food on our table. And what about the dirt lying there? That is also solar energy in one form. So, everything in this universe —good, bad or indifferent—is solar energy. A scientific attitude will give us this conviction. There are no two separate sources, one for good and another for evil. Even the dirt in the world is a product of solar energy in a particular situation. What we call *dirt* is what *nourishes* plants. How can we call that entirely bad? Out of 'dirt' we get better agriculture, better products, trees, and plants, etc.; so dirt is not bad. It is relatively bad; we cannot eat the dirt. We can eat only rice and other edible items. But, let us not condemn it; that dirt also has great value. This we forget very often. So, what is bad from one point of view, becomes good from another point of view. We must realize that.

The poison in the snake is dangerous; we are afraid of that. But, it has also got great properties. It can stop our bleeding if properly administered to our body. Thus, it gets medical value. In this way, nothing is all good, and nothing is all bad. Vedanta proclaims it, but many dualistic religions cannot understand or appreciate it. But modern scientists will appreciate it. They believe in unity behind this universe.

Vedaiśca sarvaiḥ ahameva vedyo, 'in all the Vedas, it is I alone who is to be known'. What is to be known in the Vedas is this truth, the infinite divine Reality. *Vedāntakṛt vedavideva cāham,* 'I am the creator of the Vedas; I am the knower of the Vedas.' That also we must know. What all the Vedas proclaim is this: *Sarve vedāḥ yat padam āmananti.* We get this

verse in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (I. ii. 15)*:* 'what Truth or state all the Vedas proclaim'. This is the truth, the Infinite One, and 'I am that'.

द्वाविमौ पुरुषौ लोके क्षरश्चाक्षर एव च।
क्षरः सर्वाणि भूतानि कूटस्थोऽक्षर उच्यते॥१६॥

Dvāvimau puruṣau loke kṣaraścākṣara eva ca;
Kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭastho'kṣara ucyate — 15. 16

'There are two *puruṣas* or beings in the world—the perishable and the imperishable. All beings are the perishable, and the *kūṭastha* is called the imperishable.'

So, finally coming to a very important section in the *Gītā,* Śrī Kṛṣṇa talks of the *uttama puruṣa*, the Supreme Person, in the following verse. Nowhere else, except in some of our old *Purāṇas,* do we find this idea of God as *Puruṣottama.* That is why this chapter is called *Puruṣottama-yoga.*

Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *dvāvimau puruṣau loke kṣaraśca akṣara eva ca*, 'there are two beings in this world of which one is perishable and the other is the imperishable'. Nature in its primordial state is called *akṣara puruṣa*, the imperishable *puruṣa*. The imperishable is always there and that takes various forms. And these beings are the *kṣara*, the perishable *puruṣas.* These are the two—the *akṣara puruṣa* and the *kṣara puruṣa.* Consider these two: *kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni*, 'all beings are perishable'; and *kūṭastha akṣara ucyate*, 'the *kūṭastha,* the one existing as Māya, i.e. the nature existing in its primordial state is called the *akṣara puruṣa,* the imperishable'. We have an important idea coming from this in the next verse:

उत्तमः पुरुषस्त्वन्यः परमात्मेत्युदाहृतः।
यो लोकत्रयमाविश्य बिभर्त्यव्यय ईश्वरः॥१७॥

Uttamaḥ puruṣastvanyaḥ paramātmetyudāhṛtaḥ;
Yo lokatrayamāviśya vibhartyavyaya īśvaraḥ — 15. 17

'But (there is) another, the Supreme *Puruṣa,* called the Higher Self, the Immutable Lord, who pervading the three worlds, sustains them.'

These two, the *kṣara* and the *akṣara puruṣas*, are there. But *uttamaḥ puruṣastvanyaḥ,* 'there is one other supremely good *Puruṣa*'. And what is that?, *paramātmā iti udāhṛtaḥ,* 'He is known as the Paramātman'. He is the *Uttama Puruṣa,* 'Supreme *Puruṣa* or Self'. What a beautiful conception of the *Puruṣa* as the *Uttama Puruṣa*! Further, *yo lokatrayam āviśya,* 'who enveloping the whole world'; *āviśya* means enveloping, covering; *bibharti,* 'He protects' the whole universe; He is the *avyaya,* 'imperishable'; and *īśvaraḥ*, 'the Lord', the supreme Divine. That is the wonderful truth. He is the Paramātman. He is also in me and in you as He Himself said earlier. 'One of My own sparks has entered into you', was His earlier statement. So, this Paramātman, of the nature of Pure Consciousness, is infinite and non-dual.

From the thirteenth chapter onwards we have been talking about the One in the many. There is only that One. The second verse of the thirteenth chapter said, 'Know Me to be that one *Kṣetrajña* in all the *kṣetras.*' The Knower is one, the known are many. The different bodies makes it appear as if the knower also is many. But, no; in all *kṣetras,* there is only one *Kṣetrajña,* but it is conditioned by that particular *kṣetra.* When we investigate it, we find that there are no separate *kṣetrajñas.* There is only one infinite Seer, infinite Knower, and that is Brahman. That is the language of the Upaniṣads. Here, in the *Gītā*, it is said that He is *avyaya,* He is *īśvara.* All these things of the world are *vyaya*, perishable; the whole world is *vyaya.* We are all drawing energy and dissipating it. Ultimately, we won't have any energy at all. That is the nature of the manifestation as these individual entities. But the source from which they come is *avyaya* being absolutely infinite, ever full. That is the Vedantic language.

यस्मात्क्षरमतीतोऽहमक्षरादपि चोत्तमः।
अतोऽस्मि लोके वेदे च प्रथितः पुरुषोत्तमः॥१८॥

Yaśmāt kṣaram atīto'ham akṣarāt api cottamaḥ;
Ato'smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ — 15. 18

'As I transcend the perishable and am above even the imperishable, therefore am I, in the world, and in the Veda, celebrated as *Puruṣottama*— the Highest *Puruṣa*.'

That is a famous verse. *Yasmāt,* 'because'; *kṣaram atīto'ham,* 'I am above the *kṣara* or the perishable'; *atītaḥ* means 'above' or 'transcendent' or 'beyond'; *akṣarāt api ca uttamaḥ,* 'and far more supreme compared to the *akṣara* or the imperishable'. *Uttamaḥ* is a beautiful word in Sanskrit. The best is called *uttamaḥ.* The first is the *kṣara puruṣa* or the perishable, and the second is the *akṣara puruṣa* or the imperishable. But I am far superior in goodness than even this *akṣara puruṣa. Ataḥ,* 'therefore'; *asmi loke vede ca prathitaḥ,* 'I am known in the Vedas and in the world'; as *Puruṣottamaḥ. Uttama Puruṣa* is *Puruṣottama.* So, I am well known as the *Puruṣottama.* The God of the *bhakta,* and the God of the *jñāni*, is the *Puruṣottama.* That same Brahman is both *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa,* 'with qualities' and 'without qualities', and they are one and the same. The same reality is finding expression as the world from one point of view, and as Itself, beyond the world, from another point of view. We call these in Sanskrit as *nitya* and *līlā.* Brahman, as itself, is *nitya-svarūpa;* and as the world is *līlā svarūpa,* the play of the Lord. In the tenth chapter we studied the *Vibhūti Yoga.* The whole world contains immense variety of things which are God's own *vibhūtis,* high divine manifestations. So, we don't separate the world from the divine. Therefore, *nitya* and *līlā* are one, says Sri Ramakrishna. Whatever is *nitya,* is also *līlā.* Whatever is *līlā*, is also *nitya.* This is how the philosophy of Advaita is expounded where there is nothing to separate one from the other. Appearances make for separation; in truth, there is only one behind everything. Today all the physical sciences are striving in that direction, are seeking that energy which is the Energy of all other energies—what they call as the concept of a unified field energy which can explain every other energy. That struggle is going on at the physical level. We put the physical and non-physical together, and discovered that unity in the infinite Brahman of the nature of Pure Consciousness. *Satyam jñānam anantam brahma,* said the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad:* Brahman is Truth, *satyam*—something that exists, and not an imagination. Similarly, it is *jñānam,* of the nature of Pure Consciousness; it is not a piece of inert stone. *Anantam,* infinite. Where is He?, *yo veda nihitam guhāyām,* one can realize that Brahman in one's own heart. It is hidden there. That person attains Brahman in this very body. What a wonderful attractive proposition it is, that we can approach that infinite reality, and realize it as our own Self! What a beautiful conception!

All through the Upaniṣads we have this wonderful truth expounded: that the human being has the organic capacity to realize that infinite Consciousness which manifests as his or her own consciousness in this psychophysical system. Animal bodies do not have that capacity for any knowledge except instinctual knowledge. But men and women have that capacity to understand the world outside and the world inside; and in the world inside he or she understands this wonderful dimension, the infinite dimension behind the body-mind complex. Let us recall the verse from that great Advaita book, *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* (VII. 2)—a small book in which the sage is telling us his experience: 'I am that Reality in whose infinite ocean these universes appear as waves, play for a time, and go away': *Mayyananta mahāmbodhau jagatvīciḥ svabhāvataḥ. Vīci* means 'wave'. *Jagatvīciḥ* means 'universe-waves'. All the universes, the present and the past, are just waves in that infinite ocean which I am; that is my true nature. I am not this body; I am not this little thing. What an audacious claim for a man or woman to say this! That is what a human being can do. That is our true nature—Infinite caught up in a finite net, and struggling to get out of it. That is the meaning of our struggle. Let us ask that question: 'Why do we struggle to be free?' We feel we are bound and nobody likes to be bound. We want to make ourselves free. We shall break through all these, for freedom is the goal and also our true nature. That freedom we will get *here and now* in this very body, if we know how to approach it. Vedanta shows us the way to realize our true nature. Man or woman unchained is the Divine. Divine enchained is the human being. That is the language in Sri Ramakrishna's *Gospel.* We are part of that infinite One. If we realize that, or even move in that direction a little, what a beautiful thing it will be! That divine is both Personal and Impersonal. That unity of the Personal and the Impersonal is understood through this concept of *Puruṣottama.* 'I am beyond the *kṣara puruṣa* and beyond also the *akṣara puruṣa;* therefore, in the world and in the Vedas, I am known as the *Puruṣottama.*'

We have got many conceptions of this *Puruṣottama*. But we should never forget that it is one and the same. We may call *Śiva* or *Viṣṇu* as the *Puruṣottama* according to our own choice; they are not separate beings. One and the same *Puruṣottama* is viewed in different ways and through different names from different angles 'according to people's inclinations',

rucīnām vaicitryāt. The same food material can be cooked in different ways according to our *ruci* or taste, but the food material is just the same. So, that is the language of India, the language of Vedanta. *Puruṣottama* is one whom we can love, whom we can approach, who is not a magistrate noting down every mistake we commit. He is infinite love; that is His nature. This is the highest level of mysticism. This is what the *Gītā* is expounding here in this chapter on *Puruṣottama Yoga.* We can establish happy relations with the *Puruṣottama.* He is all love, and when we love Him, we can get response from Him. We can also establish happy relations through Him with everybody else. And that very *Puruṣottama* is also the supreme Brahman, beyond all manifestation. We are living in the world of manifestation. We cannot understand the formless aspect of Brahman. Only in deep *samādhi* can we come in touch with that. But when we open our eyes and look at the world of manifestation, the only way we can approach the Divine is as the *Puruṣottama.* Swami Vivekananda calls it the unity of all souls, both human and subhuman. And we can develop *bhakti* towards that *Puruṣottama* along with *jñāna.* We can adopt a life of *jñāna-bhakti-karma* combination and become free even when we are handling the world around us. So, this is the special thought development which began in the second chapter; how, through work, through human interactions, we can realize the Supreme. This is one aspect of the *yoga* of the *Gītā,* the *Puruṣottama Yoga.*

यो मामेवमसम्मूढो जानाति पुरुषोत्तमम्।
स सर्वविद्भजति मां सर्वभावेन भारत॥१९॥

Yo mām evam asammūḍho jānāti puruṣottamam;
Sa sarvavid bhajati mām sarvabhāvena bhārata — 15. 19

‘One who, free from delusion, thus knows Me, the Highest Person, he or she, knowing all, worships Me with all one’s heart, O descendent of Bharata.’

Yo mām evam jānāti, ‘who thus knows Me’; *puruṣottamam,* ‘this *Puruṣottama*’*; asammūḍho,* ‘free from all delusions’, ‘clearly’. I know Him to be the *Puruṣottama.* We are all persons, and He is the Supreme Person. One who knows this, *sa sarvavid,* ‘he or she becomes all-knowing’. When

you know the *Puruṣottama,* you know everything because he is everything. *Bhajati mām sarvabhāvena,* 'he or she worships Me from every point of view'. Every action, every movement of the mind is a worship of the Divine. Even eating becomes an act of worship. Nothing is secular from that point of view.

इति गुह्यतमं शास्त्रमिदमुक्तं मयाऽनघ।
एतद्बुद्ध्वा बुद्धिमान्स्यात्कृतकृत्यश्च भारत॥२०॥

Iti guhyatamam śāstram idam uktam mayā'nagha;
Etat buddhvā buddhimān syāt kṛta kṛtyaśca bhārata — 15. 20

'Thus, O sinless one, has this most profound science been imparted by Me; knowing this, one attains the highest intelligence and will have accomplished all one's duties, O descendent of Bharata.'

'I have now spoken to you', says Śrī Kṛṣṇa, 'this most mysterious science.' Any *śāstra* dealing with inner life is like a mystery. The whole of inner life is a mystery. Even to the physical scientist the very heart of nature is a mystery. They study only the effect of nature and not nature itself; they study the actions of nature. In this way, if the external nature itself is such a mystery, this science of the inner dimension of the human being must be a still greater mystery. So, this *Gītā* calls it *guhyatamam. Tamam* is used to indicate superlative degree. *Tara* indicates more, and *tama* most. This science is called the most mysterious. Not that it is a *hidden* mystery; it is deep. Somebody is hiding in a cave; you look around and you do not find anybody there. But a person is there far in the interior of the cave. *Anagha,* 'O sinless one!' *Idam uktam mayā,* 'I have expounded this science now'; *etad buddhvā,* 'knowing this' truth; *buddhimān syāt,* 'you really become a wise person'. You will really become a man or woman with *buddhi* by realizing, by understanding this truth. Your *buddhi* will have achieved the best expression thereby. The *buddhi* that can capture a little knowledge here and there is a very ordinary intellect. *Buddhi* that can capture Brahman is wonderful. You will be endowed with that *buddhi.* Bhagavān Buddha, for example, realized the infinite and the immortal, and he became the *buddha,* the enlightened one. That *buddhi* is luminous in the light of the Atman. You will have that *buddhi* when you realize this truth. And *buddhi* is the only

instrument that can realize this truth. Next to the Atman is *buddhi.* Let *buddhi* look back and there the Atman is. But *buddhi* does not know how to look back. *Buddhi* is always busy looking out at the external manifestation and the variety that is there outside. But when *buddhi* learns this truth that, just behind it, there is a tremendous power, the infinite Divine, the *Puruṣottama* Himself, then that *buddhi* is the real *buddhi, buddhi* in its infinite form. What a beautiful conception of *buddhi*! Sri Ramakrishna has said that if Brahman cannot be realized by the mind, or by the intellect, what does it mean? By this mind, by this *buddhi*, you cannot realize Brahman. This mind and this *buddhi* are subject to the pressures of the sensory system. It does not become its own true Self. When you purify this *manas* and *buddhi,* then you are able to realize the truth. So, *buddhigrāhyam*, 'to be experienced by the *buddhi*', is an expression used in the *Gītā.* By pure *buddhi* one can realize the Atman. And Sri Ramakrishna puts this idea as: *Śuddha manas, śuddha buddhi* and *śuddha* Atman are one and the same. We use so many names for so many functions, but behind all of them there is only one energy. Therefore, when the *manas* is very pure, it *is* the Atman. *Etad buddhvā buddhimān syāt,* 'knowing this, one will become a real *buddhimān*, a truly intelligent person'. One thinks that he or she is intelligent because a hundred persons can be cheated with his or her brain. He or she will pat oneself and call that he or she is a *buddhimān.* What is that! Stupid intelligence! A foxy intelligence! This intelligence that can comprehend the ultimate Reality is the highest reach of intelligence.

There is a beautiful verse in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* which says, *etad buddhimatām buddhiḥ,* 'this is the *buddhi* of the man or woman who has *buddhi*'*; manīṣā ca manīṣiṇām,* 'this is the wisdom of the wise person'; *yat satyam anṛtena iha martyena āpnoti mā amṛtam*, 'that in this perishable body, you realize the Imperishable One'. 'That *buddhi* is the best which realises Me, the Immortal through the mortal.' Try to develop that *buddhi*, is the exhortation of that particular verse of the *Bhāgavatam*.

Kṛtakṛtyaśca bhārata, 'he or she becomes also a *kṛtakṛtya*, "achieving what ought to be achieved" O Arjuna'. Take life as a whole. When can you say that you are a *kṛtakṛtya*? Only when you realize this truth. Having done what ought to be done one is called *kṛtakṛtya* or *kṛtārtha.* Both mean the same. When Bhagavān Buddha got up from his meditation after his

enlightenment, He used this very word. He said, I am a *kṛtakṛtya, kṛtārtha.* Here is the *Gītā* saying the same thing.

इति पुरुषोत्तम योगो नाम पञ्चदशोऽध्यायः ।

Iti Puruṣottama yogo nāma pañcadaśo'dhyāyaḥ —

'Thus ends the fifteenth chapter, designated *The Way to the Supreme Spirit.'*

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 16

Daivásurasampad Vibhága-Yoga
The Classification of the Divine and the Non-divine Attributes

This is a very important chapter. Its ideas have been indicated in earlier chapters. Human beings are divided into two categories: the moral and the immoral. In Sanskrit, these are called daivī and āsurī. Those who believe the human system to consist only of the sensory system, they will try to find pleasure only in the sensory system; naturally, they will come into mutual conflict. Violence and greed will come, and all the other evils will come one after the other. There are others who believe that beyond this physical system there is a real Self, a spark of the Divine. Even though their lives are still at the level of the sensory system and the sensory pleasures, they know that there is something high and that they must strive for it. Those who strive for higher values are endowed with the daivī sampat. And those who strive for sensory values only are possessed of āsurī sampat. This is an age-old division in every religion and in every thinking, except among the extreme materialists who do not believe in anything beyond this sensory world. Some of these extreme materialists may be crude and some may be good also. In short range, materialism is good, but in the long term perspective, all sorts of evils begin to come out of their limited philosophy.

What we are experiencing in India is that kind of a long term manifestation of materialism. So many evils arise in society. Therefore, this classification which is found in the other scriptures also like the Mahābhārata, is there to enlighten us and also to influence humanity to follow the daivi sampat. One choice is what leads to higher levels of human development; the other is what pushes us down making us stagnant at the organic level. Sampat means wealth, and we have either āsurī sampat or daivī sampat. The choice is between the wealth of spiritual development and the wealth of material pleasure. Both are understood by the word sampat—āsurī sampat and daivī sampat; āsurī is a demoniac type; daivī is a

highly moral humanistic type. These are the two, and Śaṅkarācārya says that these refer only to human beings and not to any mythical devas and asuras. Even the word 'hell' comes here; it only means a low condition of life, and not a separate place called hell. So, in this life, we can either be a deva or an asura. The Sanskrit word deva itself means 'luminous'; some internal luminosity is there in such a person which finds expression in day-to-day life and day-to-day inter-human relations. So, in one or two verses Śrī Kṛṣṇa describes the nature of a person with daivi sampat. And in a series of verses, He also expounds the āsurī or rākṣasa qualities. This is the importance of this chapter. This applies to all societies, anywhere and everywhere. The sixteenth chapter begins with Śrī Kṛṣṇa's own statement.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच —

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said:'

अभयं सत्त्वसंशुद्धिर्ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः।
दानं दमश्च यज्ञश्च स्वाध्यायस्तप आर्जवम्॥१॥

Abhayam sattva samśuddhiḥ jñāna yoga vyavasthitiḥ;
Dānam damaśca yajñaśca svādhyāyastapa ārjavam—16. 1

'Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and yoga, almsgiving, control of the senses, yajña or sacrifice, study of the Śāstras, austerity, uprightness.'

These are wonderful character traits which you can appreciate in any human being. And fortunately, in Vedanta, the first character trait that we must have is abhayam, 'fearlessness'. No virtue or character can thrive on fear. This is a Vedantic dictum. If you want to make your child moral, don't subject it to fear. Fear will only be making the child secretly immoral. Fear has no contribution to make to moral life. So, the first virtue which Śrī Kṛṣṇa mentions, as in all Vedanta and the whole of the Upaniṣads, is fearlessness. Bhaya is fear; and a prefix makes it abhaya or fearlessness. We try to improve human beings through fear, but that improvement is only skin deep. As soon as the situation changes, that evil will come out. But when a moral conduct is absorbed by the person, then that character

becomes steady. Then only can abhaya come in. All moral life is based on fearlessness.

That fear is bad in education of children is understood everywhere today. An example by the agnostic British thinker, Bertrand Russell, is very interesting. A man had a kitten. He wanted to train that little cat to catch mice. Naturally, the cat knows how to catch mice. But this man wanted to give it a training also! He brought one mouse in front, tied it up, and put the kitten in front of it. With a stick he gave the kitten a good beating and said, 'Go and catch it'. This went on until the kitten began to shiver when it saw the mouse! That is the result of the fear element in training an entity. Fearlessness alone can bring out the natural trait of a person. Fear inhibits all the good qualities. So, abhayam is the first virtue everybody has to develop to belong to the daivī sampat category.

Then, sattva samśuddhiḥ, 'purity of buddhi or mind'; jñāna yoga vyavasthitiḥ, 'being established in the pursuit of jñāna and yoga'; jñāna is 'knowledge', and yoga is its 'practical realization'. Constantly the mind is to be engaged in the thought: 'how to achieve knowledge', 'how to live that knowledge'. That is what makes for jñāna yoga vyavasthitiḥ.

Then, dānam, 'the ability to share one's wealth with others.' That is called dānam. There is a whole hymn in the most ancient Ìg-veda called dāna stuti or 'the praise of dāna'. Dāna has been highly praised in all our literature. Whatever you have, share it. Our people, having assimilated this teaching, have become the most hospitable people in the world. Many Western people talk about the tremendous hospitality of the Indian people. It is so because they have been taught this.

One American professor, after my lecture in his college in a town in America was over, told me during our lunch in a hotel nearby something remarkable about the Indian people as I have referred to earlier. Said he, 'I, as a Fulbright scholar, along with my wife, were in Meerut University. We stayed there for three full months and not even on a single day could we eat in our own house! Everyday somebody or the other will invite us to his or her house. And it was so enjoyable. We were so happy with this human touch everywhere. We did not feel like being strangers. We have not had this experience anywhere else.' I said, 'you are right. This is a national

trait.' This dānam is a beautiful idea. I have something; you have a need; here, I give that to you. The whole thing is done in a natural way. That is an aspect of daivī sampat.

Damaḥ ca, 'and control of sensory energy'. That is damaḥ. No moral life can be without this discipline of sensory energies. If they are let loose, then there is no moral life at all. So, dama or 'discipline of the senses' is placed in a high category with śama which means 'discipline of the mind'. All civilized life needs some discipline of the sensory life. If one can eat somebody as a cannibal, there is no civilization in that person or society. But, in a civilized society, everyone is restrained from doing so. And everyone learns to restrain himself or herself. These virtues like śama which has been mentioned several times, and dama, which is mentioned in this verse, are both beautiful ideas. Keep the sensory system subordinate to your mental thinking. The senses are compared to the horses, and if the horses are not controlled, how can you enjoy your journey? It will be the horses that will then enjoy the journey, and you will only be a victim of that journey! So, controlling the senses and disciplining them is the first great step in moral and spiritual life. People of any civilized society must have a minimum of self-control. You can enjoy the Sanskrit word dama much better than its equivalent in English. If you reverse the word dama, it becomes mada. Mada means 'inebriation', pride, arrogance. Just as one gets inebriated by drinking excess wine, even so one becomes inebriated by having all power. It is a great truth in political life that power can inebriate. So, in Sanskrit we say, convert ma-da into da-ma.

A Gandhiji can get any amount of name and fame; it doesn't make him arrogant at all. He digests all of them. He himself said one day, 'Only mahātmas know the woes of mahātmas.' I have got so many woes with this mahātmā title. So, the capacity to digest all these experiences is a spiritual capacity. When it is there, no inebriation will come. And therefore, bad conduct and bad treatment of other people will not come. And thus, these two words mada and dama are very significant in Sanskrit. We are all subject to various types of madas. We have to train the mind so that it does not become inebriated. That comes only from discrimination. That is the most important work that the mind has to do in dealing with all the sensory level experiences and achievements.

Then yajñaśca, ‘and also sacrifice’; some type of worship and other practices are called sacrifice in a general way. Devotional acts to the Divine or something higher than what is seen by the five senses is called worship. Next comes svādhyāya or ‘Self study’, understanding, gathering of knowledge. Then tapaḥ or ‘self-discipline’ and concentration of the energies of the mind and the senses to understand truth. That is called tapaḥ in the best definition given to it in Sanskrit literature. The Yājñavalkya Smṛti has this one sentence for defining the word tapas. We generally understand by the word tapas some sort of austerity: twenty days fasting, standing in the sun, and doing all sorts of things difficult for the body. That is not the meaning of tapas, says Yājñavalkya Smṛti. And the beautiful definition given by that book is quoted by Śaṅkarācārya in his commentary on the Taittirīya Upaniṣad in a wonderful passage where the Upaniṣad says: ‘try to realize Brahman through tapas. Tapas is Brahman.’ The cause and the effect are one and the same. The means and the goal are one and the same. Tapas is Brahman, is the language there. How can you get Brahman by standing in the hot sun for twelve hours? That tapas won’t get you the knowledge of Brahman. So, Śaṅkarācārya quotes this sentence from Yājñavalkya Smṛti.

Manasaśca indriyāṇām ca haikāgryam paramam tapaḥ;
Tajjyāyaḥ sarva dharmebhyaḥ sa dharmaḥ para ucyate —

‘Concentration of the energies of the sense organs and the mind is known as tapas. That is the supreme dharma among all dharmas; among all that is valuable to the human being, this has the supreme value.’

It is a wonderful achievement. Whether we become a scientist, or an administrator, or a spiritual seeker, we need this capacity to concentrate the energies of the senses and the mind. And that is tapas. Behind every greatness there is tapas. To make money, you need tapas. To get knowledge, you need tapas. To get name and fame also, you need tapas. To become a physical scientist, you need tapas. So, this definition is a universal definition. Aikāgryam means ‘one-pointedness of mind’; tapa ucyate, ‘is called tapas’. That wonderful idea comes here. You are in search of something higher, something better; that search is called tapas, and so you have to train your mind and the inner energies. Then only can you achieve anything high.

Árjavam or ‘straightforwardness’ is the opposite of ‘crookedness’. Children are straightforward. They have ārjavam; they have not learned the tricks of the grownup people yet. So, ārjavam is highly praised.

This is the first verse; the next verse continues the list.

अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्याग: शान्तिरपैशुनम्।
दया भूतेष्वलोलुप्त्वं मार्दवं ह्रीरचापलम्॥२॥

Ahimsā satyamakrodhaḥ tyāgaḥ śāntirapaiśunam;
Dayā bhūteṣvaloluptvam mārdavam hrīracāpalam — 16. 2

‘Non-injury, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, tranquillity, absence of calumny, compassion to beings, non-covetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness.’

All these are beautiful qualities. In any moral code of any country you will find these characteristics in varying proportions. Ahimsā means ‘nonviolence’. Something is wrong with the human system when it just scatters violence around it. Therefore, ahimsā actually means ‘love’; behind ahimsā is love. Next comes satyam or ‘truth’; akrodham is ‘absence of anger’. Krodha is anger and akrodha means ‘not given to anger’. Tyāga is ‘spirit of detachment and renunciation’. All higher values come from tyāga. Without tyāga one cannot lead a moral life. One cannot become a good citizen also without tyāga. We must give up our own interest to some extent to work for the interest of the nation. The very basis of citizenship in a free society is tyāga. Śāntiḥ means ‘peacefulness’; the mind is peaceful, not excited. Excited minds are dangerous for oneself and others. Apaiśunam is ‘absence of ill-feeling about others’, picking holes and having ill-feelings towards others. This is a good quality of the mind. Dayā means ‘compassion’. This is a great word: dayā bhūteṣu, ‘compassion towards all beings’. Aloluptvam is ‘uncovetousness’. Covetous means somebody has something and the feeling that I must have it. Somehow I must get it. That is covetousness. Mārdavam means ‘gentleness’; derived from the word mṛdu or gentle. What a fine quality! There is a verse in the Mahābhārata which praises gentleness. Some may think that the fierce animal is better than a harmless gentleman or lady. That is wrong. The gentle conquers the

fierce. That is what the Mahābhārata says (III. 29. 30). Mṛdunā dāruṇam hanti is the verse. Dāru means ‘the fierce’. The mṛdu conquers the dāruṇa, is the sentence.

Mṛdunā mārdavam hanti
mṛdunā hanti dāruṇam;
Nā asādhyam mṛdunā kincit
tasmāt tīkṣṇataro mṛduḥ —

‘The gentle conquers the gentle. The gentle conquers the hard. There is nothing that gentleness cannot gain. Therefore, gentleness is the highest virtue. Mṛdu or gentleness is the most powerful thing, the most penetrating thing’.

A drop of water falls on a piece of rock everyday, every moment. And the hard rock is reduced in size every moment by the impact of that gentle drop. Little by little this process occurs. Water is mṛdu, soft, gentle. It is merely dripping. But what a change does it bring about in the hard rock!

In spiritual life, it is the gentle people who have conquered the world—not the fierce people. Napoleon tried to conquer the world through war. He exerted tremendous power but he thoroughly failed. When he was a prisoner in St. Helena under the British for six years, he had the time to think about it. Then, one day, in his conversations with his friends there, he is reported to have made this remark:

There are only two powers in the world, namely, the spirit and the sword. This sword has been always conquered by the power of spirit. Look at the world. Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, and myself had tried to conquer the world through the sword. We all got defeated. But Jesus Christ tried to conquer the world through the spirit, through Love, and, even today, there are millions who pay homage to him. So, which has won in history?

Take India, for example. Swami Vivekananda refers to this—we have never militarily conquered any nation throughout our history of five thousand years. Though we had the power, we had respect for other people. We believed in ‘live and let live’. And so, the people of India are called ‘the gentle people’. During the last century, Western people used to write that ‘the mild Hindu’ has no hope in the world. That is to say, the Westerners

were powerful, full of military power, wealth, etc. But, they forgot that the 'mild' can conquer the world, and that the 'powerful' can disappear in no time. Empires based on force, even the Persian empire, simply disappeared. What a powerful empire it was—conquering Greece at a distance and being defeated by the tiny Athens. What a terrible fate it was! So, you can see this in world history, that 'the meek shall inherit the earth', as Jesus had said. And that is illustrated by India's history. The meek, the gentle, does inherit the earth, and not the powerful, the aggressive or the violent. Even some of the powerful animals have vanished from the face of the earth. But, the gentle insects residing below the ground always multiply. There are a large number of them. These are all studies made by many people, and we come to the conclusion that history has demonstrated—I have put that sentence in my lecture on Vivekananda, India's Emissary to the West, in the second volume of my book, The Eternal Values for a Changing Society, published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that the meek shall inherit the earth, the peaceful shall inherit the earth, and not the aggressive, or the violent. From a short-term point of view the violent can inherit, but from the long term point of view, it can never. That is the story of human civilization.

Hrīḥ or 'modesty' is a beautiful word in Sanskrit. There was a king of Persia who used to inscribe his conquests on a stone in Persepolis in Iran. It was 2500 years ago. Within a short time of hardly two hundred years, Alexander conquered all that area! And the whole thing became ruins. A few years ago when the Shah of Persia was still ruling, he celebrated the 2500th anniversary of that great empire though it was all in ruins. Still they celebrated it; and the President or Vice-President of America went there. Within a few years the Shah also went away. Nothing of all that remained; where has all that pride and arrogance gone? So, 'dressed in a little brief authority, people misbehave like apes,' says Shakespeare in his drama 'Measure for Measure'.

Acāpalam is also a wonderful term in Sanskrit. It means 'absence of fickleness'. Fickleness is when the mind is unable to decide anything. An ever-changing mind is said to be cāpalam. The opposite of that is acāpalam. There is no fickleness; the mind is steady.

तेजः क्षमा धृतिः शौचमद्रोहो नातिमानिता।
भवन्ति सम्पदं दैवीमभिजातस्य भारत॥३॥

Tejaḥ kṣamā dhṛtiḥ śaucam adroho nātimānitā;
Bhavanti sampadam daivīm abhijātasya bhārata—16. 3

'Energy, forbearance, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred, absence of pride—these belong to one who is born for the divine state, O descendant of Bharata.'

Bhārata, 'O Arjuna!'; bhavanti sampadam daivīm abhijātasya, 'these constitute the great wealth of those born with daivī sampat', for the higher type of people in this world. What are the remaining virtues? Tejaḥ, which means 'energy', brilliance. Energy is very essential for all greatness. Then, kṣamā, 'forbearance'. This is a very great quality. In our Indian sacred books it is written: kṣamā vīrasya bhūṣaṇam, 'forbearance is the great quality of a heroic soul.' Petty souls cannot forbear. Heroic souls alone can forbear. Never think that forbearance comes out of weakness. Out of strength only can one have kṣamā.

Next comes dhṛti or 'tremendous willpower'. We can do, and we can get things done; that is called dhṛti. In the eighteenth chapter these terms will be given further definition. Then, śaucam or 'purity' or 'cleanliness'. Adroho means 'not harming others'. Why should one like to harm others. However, there are some persons who like to harm others. That tendency is called droha. Adroha means 'not harming other people'. Na atimānitā, 'without excessive pride and elation'. Many have the attitude, 'Don't you know who I am?' That is atimānitā. And the opposite of it is na atimānitā. These are the qualities that adorn one born for that status of daivī sampat. Bhavanti sampadam, 'these are the wealth'; daivīm abhijātasya, 'of people who belong to daivī sampat category'. This is the first clue. This has come several times earlier in titbits. Here the ideas are concentrated in a series of three verses. In all the scriptures you find these descriptions. You will get it even in moral codes. You will find many of these even in secular-ethical ideas. These are universal values for a healthy human society. In a free competitive animal society you may not have all these; though some animals are generous and kind, and there is lot of cooperation even in the

animal world; but these are all due to certain genetic codes in the system and not due to any achievement by moral development. But in human beings these are achieved by human effort, by moral struggle, and self-effort.

Next, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is describing the nature of those who have āsurī sampat, 'demoniac qualities'. When you study all these, you will find almost every one of them will fit our Hitler when he came to power. That is why the whole world went against him. He had no friend anywhere in the world; even in Germany many were against him because he had these āsurī qualities in abundance.

दम्भो दर्पोऽतिमानश्च क्रोधः पारुष्यमेव च।
अज्ञानं चाभिजातस्य पार्थ सम्पदमासुरीम्॥४॥

Dambho darpo'timānaśca krodhaḥ pāruṣyameva ca;
Ajñānam cābhijātasya pārtha sampadam āsurīm — 16. 4

'Ostentation, arrogance, and self-conceit, anger as also harshness and ignorance, belong to one who is born, O Pārtha (or Arjuna), for an Ásurik (demoniac) state.'

First, dambho or 'ostentation'; darpo or 'arrogance'; atimānaḥ or 'self-conceit'; next, krodha or 'anger'; pāruṣyam eva ca, 'harshness'; then, ajñānam or 'ignorance'; ca abhijātasya pārtha sampadam āsurīm, 'O Arjuna, these are the qualities of one who becomes a person with āsurī sampat'.

दैवी सम्पद्विमोक्षाय निबन्धायासुरी मता।
मा शुचः सम्पदं दैवीमभिजातोऽसि पाण्डव॥५॥

Daivī sampad vimokṣāya nibandhāyāsurī matā;
Mā śucaḥ sampadam daivīm abhijāto'si pāṇḍava — 16. 5

'The divine state is deemed to make for liberation, the demoniac state for bondage; grieve not, O Pāṇḍava (Arjuna), you are born for a divine state.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna: daivī sampad vimokṣāya, ‘these daivī sampat qualities take one to spiritual liberation or mokṣa’; nibandhāya āsurī matā, ‘āsurī sampat takes one to greater and still greater bondage’. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa said this, Arjuna must have felt within himself, ‘to what category do I belong’. So Bhagavān assures him in the next line. Mā śucaḥ, ‘don’t be sad’; pāṇḍava, ‘O Arjuna’; sampadam daivīm abhijāto’si, ‘for you are born for daivī sampat’. You are not born with āsurī sampat; your qualities are all of the daivī sampat category. This is the assurance given to Arjuna and to every one who reads this text: ‘I am also meant for daivī sampat and not for āsurī sampat.’ That conviction must come within oneself. As if Śrī Kṛṣṇa holds a mirror before us, and we see in the mirror our true form. ‘This is my true form’, that conviction must come to everyone of us. In general, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has spoken like this. Now He expresses it in detail in a more serious form.

द्वौ भूतसर्गौ लोकेऽस्मिन्दैव आसुर एव च।
दैवो विस्तरशः प्रोक्त आसुरं पार्थ मे शृणु॥६॥

Dvau bhūtasargau loke’smin daiva āsura eva ca;
Daivo vistaraśaḥ prokta āsuram pārtha me śṛṇu — 16. 6

‘There are two types of beings in this world, the divine and the demoniac. The divine have been described at length; hear from Me, O Pārtha, about the demoniac.’

Dvau bhūtasargau loke’smin, ‘two types of humanity are there in this world’; daiva āsura eva ca, ‘daiva as well as āsura’, divine as well as demoniac. Daivo vistaraśaḥ proktaḥ, ‘I have explained in detail what is the daivī sampat’; āsuram pārtha me śṛṇu, ‘now listen to me, O Arjuna, regarding the demoniac qualities.’ In the earlier chapters there were one or two references only. About daivī sampat too, it had been spoken here and there, and here in this chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has given these in detail. Now, He is concentrating on the āsurī sampat, the demoniac type of people and you will see that the characteristics given here are applicable to such people in all parts of the world who have no moral sense. They have no higher humanistic values. Only power and pleasure actuate such human beings.

प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च जना न विदुरासुराः।
न शौचं नापि चाचारो न सत्यं तेषु विद्यते॥७॥

Pravṛttim ca nivṛttim ca janā na vidurāsurāḥ;
Na śaucam nāpi cācāro na satyam teṣu vidyate — 16. 7

'The persons of demoniac nature know not what to do and what to refrain from; neither is purity found in them nor good conduct, nor truth.'

These are classifications that took place over 3000 years ago. Today, many of them apply as they are; some need a little modification to suit present day experiences. But, by and large, the picture is absolutely clear. People with āsurī sampat do not know what is to be done and what is to be avoided—pravṛtti and nivṛtti, this must be done, and that must be avoided. Janā na viduḥ, 'such people do not have that discrimination at all'. Similarly, na śaucam, 'they have no cleanliness or purity'; nāpi cācāro, 'nor do they have right conduct'; na satyam teṣu vidyate, 'neither is there truth in them'. These are all obstructions. Take, for example, one person who is very selfish and whose motivation is only personal ambition. Now, that person can become extremely unscrupulous. Nothing can stop him. No high ideal of conduct is there in the mind of that character. Such a person will be developing almost all these āsurī qualities, and many of us in India have encouraged our children in this direction for the last forty years. I quote from Prof. William McDougall, the Harvard University Psychologist of over fifty years ago: 'Young people motivated only by personal ambition, without any high character ideal before them, are bound to become unscrupulous, because scruples stand in the way of achieving one's ambition. If it stands so, I will reject them.' Such is the language he has used, and you can see full manifestation of it in human life. You will not find in them satyam or truthfulness. These are all obstructions to their personal ambition. Why should I have such ideals? This is seen in human life everywhere.

असत्यमप्रतिष्ठं ते जगदाहुरनीश्वरम्।
अपरस्परसम्भूतं किमन्यत्कामहैतुकम्॥८॥

Asatyam apratiṣṭham te jagad āhuranīśvaram;

Aparaspara sambhūtam kim anyat kāmahaitukam — 16. 8

'They say, "The universe is without truth, without a (moral) basis, without a God, brought about by mutual union, with lust for its cause; what else?"'

Many people are materialists, and it does not do much harm. But materialism can go to extremes where nothing higher than sensory pleasure at the physical level is understood to be worthwhile. That is called the crudest materialism. Today, in many parts of the world you will find this crude materialism. Evils come out of that. What is behind this materialism? What is the philosophy of life of such a people? I am not speaking about people with the usual degree of materialistic ideas. They have some good qualities and sometimes even high character—even better than that of religious believers. They are one class of people—extremely moral, ethical, and humanistic people; only they do not have any particular belief in a higher power. That doesn't matter. But, absence of belief in a higher power may eventually lead one to that kind of crude variety of materialists. That is the fear. Therefore, the description given here belongs to that type of people who are crude in their materialistic aspirations. Asatyam apratiṣṭham te jagat āhuranīśvaram: asatyam te āhuḥ, these crude materialists 'say that this world is asatyam, i.e. it has no satyam or truth behind it.' What I see, that alone is there. What I do not see, that is not there. That kind of attitude towards the world is there because of an inability to go deeper and see the Infinite Atman behind this world of relativity. They do not have that power; they do not have that inclination. So, they say, apratiṣṭham, 'this world is without any base'. There is no spiritual base to this material appearance that you see as the world. Not only so, anīśvaram, 'there is no divine power' behind the universe. They deny all this; what I physically see, that only can I believe. Not only so, they say that this whole world is aparaspara sambhūtam, 'a product of mutual union between men and women'. And for what purpose? Kim anyat, 'what else?'; kāmahaitukam, 'impelled by lust'. The only impelling power in the world is lust. Even in Freudian psychology, you will find such a tremendous assertion that sexuality and violence are the main emotions in the human world. That is the kind of result from a study of modern western depth psychology which is actually very shallow from the Indian point of view. 'What else except being

impelled by lust do people have this kind of mutual union and the world goes on? I do not believe in anything else in this world.' In our country we had this kind of Cārvāka philosophy, though I am told Cārvāka was himself a very disciplined man. Crude materialistic philosophy is called Cārvāka philosophy. It has been presented by only non-materialists in India. Materialists themselves have not written books about their philosophy. Others have written. And this is the picture they give of materialists in India. Modern materialism is also the same. But there are also high moral levels of this materialism; tremendous humanism can also go with materialism. An agnostic like Thomas Huxley had a great humanistic impulse within him, and he spoke of the aim of science as alleviation of human suffering. That is not the materialism that is referred to here. This is the crudest materialism that makes people unconcerned with happiness and misery of others. The only concern is: 'I must have pleasure. I will get it by any means possible.'

एतां दृष्टिमवष्टभ्य नष्टात्मानोऽल्पबुद्धय:।
प्रभवन्त्युग्रकर्माण: क्षयाय जगतोऽहिता:॥९॥

Etām dṛṣṭimavaṣṭabhya naṣṭātmāno alpabuddhayaḥ;
Prabhavanti ugrakarmāṇaḥ kṣayāya jagato'hitāḥ — 16. 9

'Holding this view, these ruined souls of small intellect and fierce deeds, rise as the enemies of the world for its destruction.'

With this philosophy in their minds, how do they behave in this world? Etām dṛṣṭim avaṣṭabhya, 'adopting this point of view'; dṛṣṭi means 'point of view', philosophy. Naṣṭātmāno, 'they are like lost souls'; alpa buddhayaḥ, 'their intellect also is not very sharp'. They cannot penetrate through the illogical nature of many of their positions, and cannot see subtler and still subtler aspects of Reality. They are alpa buddhayaḥ, 'small-minded'. What do such people do?, prabhavanti, 'they rise' in society; ugrakarmāṇaḥ, 'engaged in violent deeds'; kṣayāya jagato, 'in order to destroy this world'; ahitāḥ, 'being the world's enemies'. Such people arise in society. In fact, the rising of the Fascist Nazi movement in Germany is one such thing. There was some reason, and that was the Germany's jealousy of the other colonial powers. But to utilize it to create the powerful Nazi movement, where they

could do much evil, is something that Hitler alone could do at that time. Five people met together in a town and formed the Nazi Party in 1923 or so. By 1933, they almost came to power and they transformed Germany. They instilled all hatred in the people and perpetrated tremendous evil. Then came the War, and the whole Nazi movement was destroyed. New Germany is paying its tribute to the people who died through the Nazi movement and they want to forsake that movement for all time to come. Now, these are things that we have seen in our modern history in this century.

Ahitāḥ means ‘enemies’. Hitāḥ means ‘those who are friendly’.

काममाश्रित्य दुष्पूरं दम्भमानमदान्विताः।
मोहाद्गृहीत्वाऽसद्ग्राहान्प्रवर्तन्तेऽशुचिव्रताः॥१०॥

Kāmam āśritya duṣpūram dambha māna madānvitāḥ;
Mohāt gṛhītvā asad grāhān pravartante aśucivratāḥ—16. 10

‘Filled with insatiable sensory desires, full of hypocrisy, pride, and arrogance, holding evil ideas through delusion, they work with impure resolve.’

Kāmam āśritya duṣpūram, ‘having lust which cannot be satiated at all’; duṣpūram means ‘insatiable’; kāmam means ‘lust’; dambha māna madānvitāḥ, ‘full of ostentation, pride and arrogance’. Mohāt gṛhītvā asad grāhān pravartante aśucivratāḥ, ‘they, holding evil ideas through delusion, work with impure determination’. The mind cannot think clearly when it is in delusion. ‘I must do this, I must do that’—their thoughts are mostly destructive. Mohāt gṛhītvā, ‘they are grasping things through delusion’; asad grāhān, ‘holding on to evil ideas’; pravartante, ‘they function in this world’; aśucivratāḥ, ‘absolutely impure in their thinking and action’.

चिन्तामपरिमेयां च प्रलयान्तामुपाश्रिताः।
कामोपभोगपरमा एतावदिति निश्चिताः॥११॥

Cintāmaparimeyām ca pralayāntām upāśritāḥ;
Kāmopabhogaparamā etāvaditi niścitāḥ — 16. 11

‘Beset with immense cares ending only with death, regarding gratification of lust as the highest end, and feeling sure that that is all;’

Cintāmaparimeyām ca upāśritāḥ, ‘holding immeasurable cares and anxieties in their minds’; and nursing these pralayāntam, ‘up to the death or pralaya’. They have endless desires—‘I shall achieve this or that’—multiplying in their minds. A later verse will mention these desires in detail. Most of the arrogant tyrants of the world have a good bit of these traits.

Kāmopabhogaparamā, ‘their only object is how to fulfil lustful desires’; etāvad iti niścitāḥ, ‘with the conclusion that this alone is correct and nothing else.’ They are fully committed to it. They can see no higher dimension. Their horizon is so limited. This is the quality of such minds.

आशापाशशतैर्बद्धाः कामक्रोधपरायणाः।
ईहन्ते कामभोगार्थमन्यायेनार्थसञ्चयान्॥१२॥

Āśāpāśa śatairbaddhāḥ kāma krodha parāyaṇāḥ;
Æhante kāma bhogārtham anyāyena arthasañcayān— 16. 12

‘Bound by a hundred ties of desires, given over to lust and wrath, they strive to secure by unjust means hoards of wealth for sensual enjoyment.’

Āśāpāśa śatairbaddhāḥ, ‘they are tied down by the pāśa or ropes, śataiḥ, in hundreds, of āśā or hope’; kāma krodha parāyaṇāḥ, ‘ever indulging in kāma or lust and krodha or anger’; īhante kāma bhogārtham, ‘they strive in order to fulfil their desires for enjoyment’; anyāyena arthasañcayān, ‘to acquire wealth through unjust means’ such as stealing, and robbing others, and by every other means. In order to achieve the enjoyment of lustful desires one needs wealth; one doesn’t have it, but others have it; and so, one goes and robs! By any means one likes. Various ways of corruption are there. By unlawful means they accumulate wealth.

इदमद्य मया लब्दमिदं प्राप्स्ये मनोरथम्।
इदमस्तीदमपि मे भविष्यति पुनर्धनम्॥१३॥

Idamadya mayā labdham idam prāpsye manoratham;
Idam asti idam api me bhaviṣyati punardhanam — 16. 13

‘This has been gained by me today; this desire I shall obtain; this is mine, and again, this wealth also shall be mine in future.’

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is now telling what such people think about? Idamadya mayā labdham, ‘this I have now gained’ by robbing people; idam prāpsye manoratham, ‘that which is according to my heart’s desire, I shall get next’; idam asti, ‘this I have’; idam api me bhaviṣyati punardhanam, ‘I shall seek much more wealth by other means also’. Thus I shall go on accumulating the means to satisfy my sensual cravings.

असौ मया हतः शत्रुर्हनिष्ये चापरानपि।
ईश्वरोऽहमहं भोगी सिद्धोऽहं बलवान्सुखी॥१४॥

Asau mayā hataḥ śatruḥ haniṣye cāparān api;
Æśvaro’ham aham bhogī siddho’ham balavān sukhī — 16. 14

‘That enemy has been slain by me, and others also shall I slay. I am the Lord, I enjoy, I am successful, powerful and happy.’

Asau mayā hataḥ śatruḥ, ‘this, my enemy, I have destroyed’; now I shall attack the other enemy and kill him or her also. Haniṣye cāparān api, ‘and the other (enemies) also I shall kill’, is the desire in the mind of such a person. Æśvaro’ham, ‘I am the Lord’; aham bhogī, ‘I am the enjoyer’. It is I who enjoy all these delights. Siddho’ham, ‘I am perfect’; balavān, ‘I am full of power’; sukhī, ‘a happy person am I’. These are the thoughts of such people. When you study the biography of those who have done lots of ill to human society, you will find all this in the way of their thinking. Here it is put together in a concrete form.

आढ्योऽभिजनवानस्मि कोऽन्योऽस्ति सदृशो मया।
यक्ष्ये दास्यामि मोदिष्य इत्यज्ञानविमोहिताः॥१५॥

Áḍhyo’bhijanavān asmi ko’nyo’sti sadṛśo mayā;
Yakṣye dāsyāmi modiṣya ityajñānavimohitāḥ — 16. 15

‘“I am rich and well-born. Who else is equal to me? I will sacrifice, I will give, I will rejoice.” Thus, they are deluded by ignorance.’

Asmi, ‘I am’; āḍhyaḥ, ‘rich’, very rich, with a good measure of riches; and am abhijanavān, ‘born in a very good high-class family’; ko’nyo’sti sadṛśo mayā, ‘who else is equal to me’ in this world? Yakṣye, ‘I shall sacrifice’; dāsyāmi, ‘I shall give’; out of compassion I shall throw some coins towards people! Modiṣye, ‘I shall enjoy’; ityajñānavimohitāḥ, ‘thus, they are deluded through ignorance’.

अनेकचित्तविभ्रान्ता मोहजालसमावृता:।
प्रसक्ता: कामभोगेषु पतन्ति नरकेऽशुचौ॥१६॥

Anekacittavibhrāntā mohajālasamāvṛtāḥ;
Prasaktāḥ kāmabhogeṣu patanti narake’śucau — 16. 16

‘Bewildered by many a fancy, covered by the meshes of delusion, addicted to the gratification of lust, they fall down into a foul hell.’

Anekacittavibhrāntā, ‘bewildered by many a fancy of the mind’; how many pulsations rise in the minds of the deluded persons! Mohajālasamāvṛtāḥ, ‘surrounded by moha jāla or meshes of delusion’. One thing you find in such people who are full of power and have drunk the wine of power: they cannot listen to anybody’s advice. They live in their own little world. Others must only say ‘yes, yes’ to them. That is their nature. All power-hungry tyrant leaders have this characteristic. Prasaktāḥ kāmabhogeṣu, ‘deeply interested and engaged in satisfying lustful desires’; patanti narake’śucau, ‘such people live or fall into the most impure type of hell’. That means, they lead the most impure type of hellish life. Hell is not a separate place. It is just the human system itself. You will find hell there in the human system. When every thing is wretched, and all kinds of violence, evil, etc., exist, that is what makes for naraka or hell.

आत्मसम्भाविता: स्तब्धा धनमानमदान्विता:।
यजन्ते नामयज्ञैस्ते दम्भेनाविधिपूर्वकम्॥१७॥

Átmasambhāvitāḥ stabdhā dhana māna madānvitāḥ;
Yajante nāmayajñaiste dambhena avidhipūrvakam — 16. 17

‘Self-conceited, haughty, filled with the pride and intoxication of wealth, they perform sacrifices in name, out of ostentation, disregarding

ordinance.'

Átmasambhāvitāḥ, 'self-conceited'; stabdhā, 'haughty'; dhana māna madānvitāḥ, 'filled with self-pride and intoxication arising from wealth'; yajante nāmayajñaiste, 'only for namesake they do some sacrifices etc.'; dambhena, 'out of ostentation'; avidhipūrvakam, 'not according to the rules of scriptures'. They break all injunctions and may do some bit of religious ceremonies out of ostentation and arrogance.

अहङ्कारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं च संश्रिताः।
मामात्मपरदेहेषु प्रद्विषन्तोऽभ्यसूयकाः॥१८॥

Ahaṅkāram balam darpam kāmam krodham ca samśritāḥ;
Mām ātmaparadeheṣu pradviṣantaḥ abhyasūyakāḥ — 16. 18

'Possessed of egoism, power, insolence, lust and wrath, these malignant people hate Me (the Self within) in their own bodies and those of others.'

Samśritāḥ, 'possessed of'; ahaṅkāram, 'egoism'; balam, 'power'; darpam, 'pride'; kāmam, 'lust'; krodham ca, 'and anger'; mām ātmaparadeheṣu pradviṣanto, 'they spurn Me who am present in themselves and all beings'. Abhyasūyakāḥ, 'these are malignant people'; they hurt Me in themselves and in others by their wicked ways. The Lord is saying, I am present in all beings, I am also present in other things in nature. And this person, by his or her behaviour, injures Me who is present in oneself and in others. Mām ātmaparadeheṣu, 'Me, in the bodies of oneself and others'; pradviṣanto, 'they spurn' with great hatred; abhyasūyakāḥ, 'they are malignant people' who hate others. These people of demoniac nature behave in this fashion and exhibit the above-mentioned qualities. When they hate people, when they rob people, or when they insult others, they do so to Me who am in them. This is the Vedantic teaching. What would be their fate? Śrī Kṛṣṇa answers that in the next few verses, and the chapter ends with the basic evils that are at the back of all these evils. These basic evils are only three and that Śrī Kṛṣṇa will summarise in the remaining verses.

Unfortunately, such people with demoniac characteristics are there in society. Sometimes they may change, they may improve; sometimes they

are so fixed in it that there is no way to get out. The word used here is ‘hell’, which means, as I said earlier, ‘hellish conditions’. There is no separate place called hell or heaven. Also, there is no separate people called asura or deva. Humanity itself is of these two types. We can choose to be either this or that. Our choice is in our hands; some people choose to be of the demoniac type. And he or she goes down and further down to a hellish condition. Wherever there is no light, there is only darkness, that condition is treated as hellish. The Light of the Atman, the Light of the Divine within is completely shut out from such people. They live a hellish life.

In the *Æśā* Upaniṣad (verse 3), this verse occurs: Asūryā nāma te lokāḥ andhena tamasā āvṛtāḥ…, ‘they go to the worlds of the asuras covered by blinding darkness’; darkness in the form of ignorance of the Self. That world is full of darkness and evil. Tāmste pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmahano janāḥ, ‘they, who are ātma hanas, go to these worlds’. A wonderful word occurs here: ātmahanaḥ or ‘Self-suicide’. Átmā means Self; hanaḥ means ‘killing’. Átmahanaḥ means suicide. People may commit suicide physically, but here the reference is to people who commit spiritual suicide. They deny the Atman; they go far away from this truth and live in darkness and delusion. Such people are called ātmahanaḥ. Physical suicide is bad, but not so bad as a man or woman, who is so high in evolution, denying the Atman within and choosing to go in for spiritual suicide. Denying the infinite Self and misbehaving like this is worse than physically committing suicide. That is why in the *Æśā* Upaniṣad this idea has been mentioned. And you get it in the Gītā in an elaborate way.

तानहं द्विषतः क्रूरान् संसारेषु नराधमान्।
क्षिपाम्यजस्रमशुभानासुरीष्वेव योनिषु॥१९॥

Tānaham dviṣataḥ krūrān samsāreṣu narādhamān;
Kṣipāmi ajasram aśubhān āsurīṣveva yoniṣu — 16. 19

‘These malicious and cruel evil-doers, the world’s most degraded among the human species, I hurl them perpetually into the wombs of the demoniac only.’

Tān dviṣataḥ krūrān, ‘these people who are krūraḥ or very cruel and dviṣataḥ or malicious’. Without tremendous blindness of spiritual awareness one cannot become so cruel. Their condition is that they are completely shut out from the Divine that is within. That is the type who go in for cruelty. We have seen many examples of terrible cruelty; even the terrorists, for example, resort to so much cruelty. So also, criminals. Plenty of cruelty because they have forgotten that they belong to the human species; they have forgotten their humanity and their Divinity. Tān, ‘such people’; dviṣataḥ, ‘these hateful people’; krūrān, ‘who are cruel’; aśubhān, ‘evil-doers’; samsāreṣu narādhamān, ‘they are the worst among the human beings in the world’. Nara adhamān means ‘the worst among human beings’; they are still human beings, but their qualities and thinking are demoniac and so they are the worst among human beings. They have forgotten their humanity and Divinity. Aham, ‘I, the Lord’; kṣipāmi, ‘throw them into’ hell, again and again. In what way?, through their own actions through their own attitudes. There is no question of somebody else trying to put them in hell. But, in the order of nature, there is this result coming from a particular cause. Aham kṣipāmi, ‘I throw them or make them take birth’; ajasram, ‘again and again’; āsurīṣveva yoniṣu, ‘in the wombs of the demoniac’. They cannot get higher because their moral capital is very very low and poor. This is the future of the person who has become demoniac. But, he or she can change later on. That is always emphasized. Men and women can change, mind can become better, and they have the freedom to become spiritual. In some chance encounter with a holy person, that person can change. Such examples are there in every society. But, as it is, such a person is living a very hellish life, again and again, until an awakening comes.

आसुरीं योनिमापन्ना मूढा जन्मनि जन्मनि।
मामप्राप्यैव कौन्तेय ततो यान्त्यधमां गतिम्॥२०॥

Ásurīm yonim āpannā mūḍhā janmani janmani;
Mām aprāpyaiva kaunteya tato yānti adhamām gatim—16. 20

‘Obtaining the demoniac wombs, and deluded birth after birth, not attaining Me, they thus fall, O son of Kuntī, into a still lower condition.’

Ásurīm yonim āpannā, ‘when they get into this āsurī or demoniac body’; mūḍhā, ‘these foolish people’; janmani janmani, ‘life after life’; mām aprāpyaiva, ‘without ever realizing Me’ in their own hearts; kaunteya, ‘O son of Kuntī’; tato yānti adhamām gatim, ‘thus they go to the worst state of existence’. Human beings have got a high destiny; these people don’t realize all that. They go to the lowest level of human life, mām aprāpya, ‘without getting Me’, without realizing Me who is ever present in them as the infinite Self of all. This is the extreme form of āsurī sampat. Now comes up a summing up of the whole statement regarding daivī sampat and āsurī sampat in a very beautiful verse.

त्रिविधं नरकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः।
कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभस्तस्मादेतत्त्रयंत्यजेत्॥२१॥

Trividham narakasyedam dvāram nāśanam ātmanaḥ;
Kāmaḥ krodhaḥ tathā lobhaḥ tasmāt etat trayam tyajet—16. 21

‘The gateway to hell, destructive of the self, is of three kinds, namely, lust, anger and greed; therefore, one should forsake these three.’

The word naraka is used here, and I repeat, it does not mean any particular place. It is a particular mental condition. Our mental state may be either heavenly or hellish. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling here that there are three doorways to the hell. Trividham narakasyedam dvāram nāśanam ātmanaḥ; narakasya dvāram, ‘the gateway to hell or hellish life’; is trividham, ‘of three kinds’. We can enter into the hell through all the three, or through one or two, for ‘self-destruction’, nāśanam ātmanaḥ. How does one get into a hellish condition?, through one of these three doors. What are these three doors? The three attractive doorways are these: kāmaḥ krodhaḥ tathā lobhaḥ, ‘lust, anger, and greed’. These are the three doorways to hellish life. Lust beyond a certain level can take one to a complete hellish condition. You can see that in modern civilization and in earlier civilizations also. You find in so many tragedies in history this particular entity called kāma. When one oversteps the limits, it makes people get into trouble. All the physical ailments, and mental ailments result from this. As Sri Ramakrishna said, kāma is bhoga, ‘sensory satisfaction’; if you carry it too far, you are sure to come to roga or ‘disease’—physical or mental. The first doorway to hellish

life is kāma or lust. Then comes krodha or ‘anger’; we have discussed it several times in the Gītā. Krodha or anger can make a person absolutely mad, and in that madness, that person can also do any evil thing. And lastly, tathā lobha, ‘as also greed’; never-ending greed is called lobha. Earning money and spending it for oneself is not lobha. It is absolutely natural and normal. But this irresistible urge for more and more that takes one to evil ways and to trouble is bad. Even in our daily newspapers we find people who have plenty seeking for more and more, and finally getting into some mess and trouble. It is going on every day. It is good to know what is what. In normal life, one has kāma; a little krodha is allowed in life; in fact, psychology tells us that a little krodha is necessary in human life. Otherwise, we become goody-goody and anybody may handle us. That should not be. So, a little anger is essential; only we should make it constructive and creative in operation. That is called ‘righteous indignation’ in psychology. When you find a rich person troubling a poor person, you can’t pass by silently. You must see that you protest against this. When you protest, anger comes. That anger is creative anger. There is a place for such creative anger in human life. If we don’t have it, we become ineffective in every sense of the term. All wrongs and injustices will multiply if we do not have indignation against evil, and we will be living in a hell made by ourself. So, anger has a positive role to play there. Public opinion to protest against injustice and evil is needed. Anger has a place in our life just like in physiology pain has a place in human life. We don’t want pain, but without pain we will die in no time! Pain alerts us.

Just as pain has a value for human preservation, so also anger has a creative value. But, it must be a controlled, disciplined anger, and not that wild outburst of anger. There you lose everything. So, these things at a level are positive; at another level they become negative. This distinction we must know through our own discrimination. A moral life, or a life of high character needs the spirit of discrimination or viveka. Is it right or is it wrong? How far I must go? When should I stop? This knowledge must be there. But, the energy is needed. Anger is an energy. We have to push it into society to make for justice, welfare, etc.; the whole thing must be done in a highly disciplined manner. That has a place in human life and human society. But beyond it, kāma, krodha, and lobha, become gateways to hell

when one has no control over them. They control us all the time. That is very bad. Any emotion or any feeling must be within our control. Beyond our control, they will ruin us, because they are sources of tremendous energy. Remember, the intellect has very little energy; but these feelings and emotions have tremendous energy. And the intellect is meant to control this by a different type of energy: energy of knowledge, energy of discrimination. That is buddhi. And so, these various and wonderful energies are hidden in the human being. Intellectual energy is discrimination, judgement. That power must be there to control these enormous energies that are functioning in the emotional system. And the energies functioning in the senses are compared to horses. Horses must be controlled if we are to enjoy our ride. That is the language of the third chapter of the Kaṭha Upaniṣad which we referred to earlier.

Tasmāt etat trayam tyajet, 'therefore, please forsake these three.' We should not get into their clutches. We should not let them overpower us. We should be the master and not they; that is the language. All moral development in society comes only by this discipline of lust, anger and greed. Where there is no such discipline, that society becomes immoral. It has no inner strength. That is the end of that society or civilization.

Take Gibbon's study of The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire; there we find that all these three evil forces became very strong in later Roman empire. Nobody could control themselves. And thus, we see that a king is appointed in Rome one day. A few days later he is killed and then there is another king appointed. And he has to pay enormous amount of money to the army which is the controller of everything. If he does not pay that money, that army will finish him one day. These kinds of disruption came in human life in that great Roman empire, an empire which at one time was a tremendous centre of discipline; there was once tremendous order and great contributions made by the Roman mind. But towards the end, when these weaknesses came in—no self-control, too much of lust, too much of anger, too much of money craziness—there was decay. In about two or three hundred years that civilization became extremely decayed, and at one touch from external invasion of the barbarians, Rome fell, never to rise again.

Our society also has passed through these various experiences, but somehow every time some teacher came and gave us a new message. Their character was so great and pure that it had an impact on the national mind, and we rose once again. That is what happened during Bhagavān Buddha's time. He was the one teacher who gave tremendous moral elevation and spirit of compassion to the nation at that time. Wherever there is the spirit of compassion, none of these evils will thrive there. How can lust, anger and greed function when the heart is full of compassion? Such a person cannot exploit others, because of his or her compassion for others. So, moral life became very high during that period, and it continued for a few centuries. Again, slowly it decayed and vanished; the old elements came out once again. Then came the foreign invasions; and we are now passing through a period of decay behind us and a period of great development ahead of us. In between, we have a mixture of everything.

I used to ask this question to the students who listened to me in my American University Lectures: You have the Evil Day, and other days to mark certain occasions. Perfectly okay. I do not want to hide anything. In India today there is so much of evil, so many wicked practices, but it is passing through a tremendous phase. So, any judgement about India of today will be correct: say that it is good, and that will be correct; say that it is bad, and that too will be correct because India is passing though a tremendous transition period. Good things are taking place here and there; wickedness and evil also you will find plenty on the surface. We are passing through that period. But, because we had good teachers like Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and in the political life people like Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian life and thought was influenced by them. At some time their influence will be felt in a big way. Then we shall start climbing up, controlling ourselves, becoming more moral and more human. What a beautiful development will come then! It is for this that Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda came.

Their contribution is not merely for India. Today, it is for the whole world, because the world is so small and communication so easy. It was not so in Buddha's time. Today, one can easily communicate. Seven years after Sri Ramakrishna's passing away, his name reached America through Swami Vivekananda. Imagine! It could never have happened before. And so, in this

way, these evils which create a hellish society will disappear. If we cannot trust each other, where is heaven? Mutual trust is essential in a society. But, if the majority of people are birds of prey trying to catch somebody, trying to exploit somebody, then we cannot trust anybody. Everybody is an evil genius bent on harming others. Even the husband cannot trust the wife, nor can the wife trust the husband. That situation comes when this evil multiplies. Whereas in a healthy society there is so much of trust, so much of mutual understanding because people are not greedy. One does need money for maintenance, but that does not make one greedy. We had that type of attitude at one time. We have been losing it; and now we are getting it back again. Some sections will develop first, others will develop later.

All over the world you will find therefore these two types of people: the moral type and the demoniac type. When moral people become less and less, and the demoniac become more and more, things become bad. Then slowly a change takes place. The moral people become more and more. They are appreciated and that is a wonderful thing. Swami Vivekananda said: when you appreciate virtue, you are on the road to becoming virtuous. If you appreciate evil, you are on the road to becoming a hellish person. There is still respect for virtue, appreciation of virtue all over the world. And therefore, there is hope. We may not become so callous or cynical about all good things. Good things are appreciated. A great deed is done and we appreciate it. A boy saves another boy from drowning, and the Government of India gives him an award. We appreciate that kind of action where there is preparedness even to sacrifice one's life for others. But this rising up is a very slow process. Going down is a slow process; going up also is a very slow process. But we can discern that some new development is taking place. New ideas have been put into the society, and one day a beautiful development will take place. So, put into society great ideas. Society is like a cauldron; something is being cooked there; we put some good moral ideas also. Then, what comes out finally will be a very good society with people endowed with more moral values or daivī sampat. That is the belief and faith of the people of India. By our own long national experience of going down and of climbing up again and again, we understand that we have been down, but now, we are slowly going up. New

forces have come to develop these qualities in us. That is how we can see the present situation.

So, these are the three doorways through which people enter into hell. 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' That is a beautiful saying of Jesus, and 'Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.' That is the statement in the New Testament (The Gospel According to St. Matthew 7:13-14). Many like to go exclusively through these three doors of kāma, krodha, and lobha. They go and they suffer. And some time awakening comes to them. They return to the moral way. Having said this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

एतैर्विमुक्तः कौन्तेय तमोद्वारैस्त्रिभिर्नरः।
आचरत्यात्मनः श्रेयस्ततो याति परां गतिम्॥२२॥

Etairvimuktaḥ kaunteya tamodvāraiḥ tribhirnaraḥ;
Ácarati ātmanaḥ śreyaḥ tato yāti parām gatim — 16. 22

'One who has got freed from these three gates of darkness, O son of Kuntī, practises what is good for oneself, and thus goes to the Goal Supreme.'

Vimuktaḥ, 'one has gone beyond' or one who is free; etaiḥ tribhiḥ tamodvāraiḥ, 'from these three gates of darkness'; tamodvāra is the gate of darkness by which one enters into darkness and more blinding darkness. Nobody likes darkness; all want light. So, one who is free from these three —kāma, krodha, and lobha, which are doorways to darkness; such a naraḥ, 'human being'; ācarati ātmanaḥ śreyaḥ, 'becomes engaged in working for one's own development and welfare'; and tato yāti parām gatim, 'by that effort he or she will go to the highest level of existence.' These three—lust, anger and greed—are the gateways to hell. But if one discriminates and changes one's direction, one will go through the doorway to light and more light. Such a person will rise to the highest level of character. One of the great truths that comes to us from our historical experience is: even the worst person can and does change to better. We have seen it happening any number of times. There is none condemned for ever. For some time, one

may be down; but, by some chance, one may rise up. There are people who by just listening to someone's lecture, have had their minds changed and gone into the good direction. There was a prisoner in the jail in Calcutta who saw a picture of Sri Ramakrishna. The prisoner had done some crime. That picture of Sri Ramakrishna gave him a new inspiration. Then he wanted a book on Sri Ramakrishna, reading which, he became a completely changed person. So, there is that Divine spark in every one of us. It may assert some time or the other. Nobody is, therefore, eternally condemned. There is no eternal damnation in Vedanta. It is all temporary. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here that such a person practises one's own welfare after giving up the ways that lead to hell, and goes to the highest state of existence. A ray of light, a ray of illumination comes and the mind and heart becomes illumined. Moral life becomes natural to such a person. We don't have to struggle for it. That is the importance of this verse.

यः शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य वर्तते कामकारतः।
न स सिद्धिमवाप्नोति न सुखं न परां गतिम्॥२३॥

Yaḥ śāstra vidhim utsṛjya vartate kāmakārataḥ;
Na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukham na parām gatim—16. 23

'One who, setting aside the ordinance of the Śāstras, acts under the impulse of desire, attains not to perfection, nor happiness, nor the Goal Supreme.'

Yaḥ śāstra vidhim utsṛjya, 'those who forsake the teachings of the śāstras'. Śāstra is the word for science; it is also the word for our scriptures. Why are scriptures to be obeyed? They give everyone true directions for a good life. Therefore, scriptures are to be obeyed. Suppose a scripture tells you to do something that is wrong, that scripture is no scripture at all. We have got a mixture of scriptures in our society. Some books will say, practise untouchability; we have to say 'no' to that scripture. They are all false scriptures. No true scripture will ever say so if it is based upon the Śruti which says everyone is Divine. Any teaching of Smṛti that goes against this Śruti teaching is absolutely valueless. We are not expected to follow that. So any kind of scriptural teaching which is based on the Śruti, is given to us for our own welfare, and therefore we adopt it. Therefore,

follow the injunctions of the scriptures. Scriptures tell us what is good for us, just as in diet we follow the science of dietetics or śāstra related to diet. We need certain calories, certain qualities of food, certain amount of fat and other things. Therefore, we follow a science. Scientific dieting is very beautiful. Similarly, we deal with the body in a scientific way. Then there are other aspects of science dealing with the world around us. In all these matters science is very good. But here, in the higher dimensions of life, a spiritual science is to be followed. That is also a śāstra. The former is a physical śāstra and the latter is a mental and moral śāstra. Completely negating the injunctions of the śāstras, whoever works and behaves out of his or her own kāma or 'inclination or desire'; na sa siddhim avāpnoti, 'he or she can never achieve siddhi, i.e. success or perfection'; na sukham, 'nor happiness'; na parām gatim, 'nor the highest state of life'. Follow the śāstra; that is the injunction. Don't break the śāstra.

But, here I am making a distinction. From our point of view, we have a traditional understanding that the Śruti or the Upaniṣads is the highest śāstra. Any teaching that goes against the Upaniṣads is no śāstra for us. But our misfortune has been that we followed for centuries together the śāstras which violated the teachings of the Śrutis. One such practice is untouchability, or caste arrogance. This is against Śruti. Śruti speaks of equality. The same Atman is there in every being. We never followed that. So, there are sections in our śāstras which do not deserve to be called śāstra. That is why we are rejecting them. Our very traditional wisdom says: Śruti smṛti virodhe tu śrutireva garīyasi, 'if there is a contradiction between Śruti and Smṛti, Śruti alone will prevail'. We have got new śāstras to help us in this period. Our Constitution tells us about human unity, human dignity, and human freedom. That is true śāstra. Wherever there is discrimination between one person and another, it is not a śāstra. So, the idea 'follow the śāstra' is to be understood as 'follow the Śruti'. Śruti will never speak against any human being. Śruti is universal. The word Sanātana comes there. Sanātana Dharma or Eternal Dharma is based on the Śruti. But, Smṛti is what deals with day-to-day dharma, or the yuga dharma of a particular period. This distinction is accepted by Indian orthodoxy, and we must follow it today; and we are doing it. All the Smṛtis which spoke of human discrimination are being rejected today. When they speak of human unity,

we are accepting it, because it is based upon the Śruti. That is a wonderful distinction which exists nowhere else in the world. The Śruti is eternal; the Smṛtis come and go. That is why we had many Smṛtis during the last five thousand years. Śruti is only one because it deals with Truth—the truth about human beings, the truth about human relationships, the truth about the Divine hidden in all, and that truth is unchanging, eternal. That is the validity of the Śruti. And the Smṛti must follow the Śruti. If it follows the Śruti, the Smṛti is accepted as a śāstra. If it doesn't follow the Śruti, if it violates the Śruti, then it has no value as a śāstra. Keeping this discrimination in mind this verse is to be understood. Therefore, yaḥ śāstra vidhim utsṛjya, 'those who break the injunctions of the Śruti, injunctions of the śāstras'; vartate kāmakārataḥ, 'and act because of their own propensity for this and that'; na sa sidhim avāpnoti, 'he or she cannot achieve spiritual development or perfection'; na sukham na parām gatim, and 'no kind of happiness will come to such a person, nor the goal Supreme'; that is the language. The next verse also is going to tell us to follow the śāstras. And the next chapter also begins with a question of Arjuna that discusses what will happen to one who breaks the injunctions of the śāstras. So, the word śāstra comes in these three verses.

It is for human welfare only that there are these vidhis or injunctions of the śāstras. For example, take one wonderful teaching from our Áyurveda found also in other scriptures: when we eat, we should fill half the stomach with food; one-fourth of the stomach with water; and the remaining one-fourth should be left empty for the free passage of air. This is the instruction given. If we fill our stomach fully, we will suffer. That is one injunction. It is a śāstra. Studying the human system, they have given us this instruction. So, in this way, there are so many instructions given to us by the śāstras. If we follow them, we will be better. If we don't follow them we will suffer. In the next verse which is the last verse of the sixteenth chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is therefore telling:

तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितौ।
ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि॥२४॥

Tasmāt śāstram pramāṇam te kāryākārya vyavasthitau;

Jñātvā śāstravidhānoktam karma kartum ihārhasi — 16. 24

‘So, let the śāstras be your authority in ascertaining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Having known what is said in the ordinance of the śāstra, you should act in the world.’

Therefore, your pramāṇa, your source of knowledge, is the śāstra. Follow the śāstra; it is meant for you. We have to understand that word along with the new derivations I have referred to earlier. Truths conveyed by the Śruti are verified and verifiable knowledge according to Ádi Śaṅkarācārya through the term, vastu tantra jñāna, ‘knowledge of things as they are’, and not what one wants a thing to be. Many Smṛtis are also known as śāstras, but they do not contain the truths which the Śrutis give. They often go against the teachings of the Śruti. Some Smṛtis say: women have no rights. I read a Smṛti where wives have no rights but only duties from morning 4 o’clock to night 10 o’clock. That rule is not sanctioned by the Śruti. Perfect equality between man and woman is what the Śruti has said. We have violated that Śruti in the name of following the śāstras. We did not discriminate between one śāstra and the other. But, today we have to make that discrimination. The verse is correct: follow the śāstras. Therefore, says the verse, the śāstra is your source of knowledge; for what?, kāryākārya vyavasthitau, ‘in regard to what should be done, and what should be avoided’. In this matter follow the śāstra. For the inner life there is a spiritual śāstra; for the outer life also there are śāstras like physical science, and medical science, etc. One deals with the outer life and the other deals with our inner life. How to make one healthy and pure? That the spiritual śāstra alone can tell. It tells us what is kārya, ‘to be done’, and what is akārya, ‘not to be done’. In this subject, śāstras will be your authority. Follow the śāstra, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Thus, jñātvā, ‘knowing’ this truth; śāstra vidhāna uktam karma kartum ihārhasi, ‘you are to perform actions sanctioned by the śāstras.’ Such actions alone one should perform. And śāstra always speaks about what is good for all people. If it sets one person against the other, that is no śāstra. A śāstra like physical science is real if whatever it teaches is good for one and all. Therefore, it is worth following. If it does good to me and does evil to ten others, that is no śāstra. And no real śāstra, in which there is that

sense of justice and respect for all beings, will ever say so. The same Atman is in every being. So, any kind of discriminatory teaching cannot come from a true śāstra, though many of our śāstras contain many discriminatory teachings. Some of the Smṛtis say: if a śūdra utters any Veda, molten lead must be poured into his or her ears. That is nothing but 'our own prejudices put in the form of a śāstra'. There are sectional prejudices—one section against another, strong people against weak people. We have these things in plenty. Even upper classes have made laws meant for strengthening themselves and weakening the common people. And they call it 'law'! There is such a thing as a lawless law! We are fighting against that today. Many societies are driven by lawless laws. They had power, they arrogated it, prepared a law, and said that this law is to be followed. That is why there is protest against such laws. In many countries you will find all revolutions come when laws become lawless, absolutely antihuman. Therefore, there is protest, mild and sometimes strong.

Take the French Revolution. There can be no better example than that when all the laws went to exploit the common people, destroy them practically by a small section of the upper classes and the catholic church. The church and the upper classes were everything. All property belonged to them. The poor people had no say in the matter. This became too strong from the reign of Louise xiv to Louise xvi. France was really in a bad condition. Great thinkers came and spoke of human rights. People got awakened, and then came that wonderful revolution in 1789. French Revolution is a tremendous event in world history. In a few days it turned everything upside down. King and queen were executed; thousands of aristocrats were executed; all the property was in their hands. Nobody else had any property. That kind of 'no law' was established by law. But that law is really lawless. Often we use the expression, 'Government established by law'. That is a wonderful expression in political language. But that law is questioned; it is a one-sided law. Because it is done by a group of people at the top for their own advantage. We resist it. If people have the strength they will resist it. If they resist and are destroyed, then that old lawless law will continue. If they resist and succeed, then a new law will come, much more just, much more concerned with the welfare of all. You can never get a perfect law in any society. But, you can get better and still better laws. It

will be possible for more and more attention to be paid to the welfare of the people by that law.

So, there is a beautiful idea: the ideal society is that where justice and law coincide. There is law; much of it is based on injustice. That is not good. Let there be more of justice in society. Then law and justice will coincide. That is a healthy society. There is much injustice in India today because law is in the control of a section of people at the top. They control everything. People have to be alert so that their dignity and their individuality also find a place. That is why alertness of the citizen is essential in a democracy. Without any serious political violence we have established a democratic state in India. Now, we only need alertness. Wherever there is injustice, we must protest. We must join together and protest. This is the spirit that keeps justice alive in society, what we call dharma. Everybody knows one's own limitation. Everybody knows that everyone has his or her rights; I will respect it. When this attitude becomes pervasive, we will have a healthy society. Our society is far far away from that healthy state. That is why our education must become capable of enlightening us on this subject. What is my role in society? I am not an isolated individual. I have got a responsibility. I am a citizen. When this awakening comes in at least fifteen or twenty per cent of the people, things will completely change. Today, not even one per cent of the people of India have this attitude. We are citizens only because of our age. Mere physiological age makes one a citizen. But what about the mind? That type of mind has not yet come. That spirit of responsibility, that desire to see injustice being removed from society has not yet come. That is what makes a true citizen such an important element in a democracy.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here: Tasmāt śāstram pramāṇam te. Śāstra must be accepted as your guide. Our Constitution has nothing seriously bad in it. But its implementation is indeed very very bad. Our Constitution contains very lofty ideas, very humanistic ideas like abolition of casteism and untouchability, equality of men and women etc.; all these are there. Such a śāstra we can respect. But the way it is implemented is entirely defective. There is no real equality, no real justice in society. Therefore, the only remedy is alertness. A set of alert citizens in every component state must act when something goes wrong. That is our big responsibility. The Gītā

teaching is for individual inward life as well as his or her outward life. Its message of yoga taught in the second chapter refers to outward productive efficiency and inward spiritual efficiency. In an unjust society, we cannot practise very high moral and spiritual values. So, if I want to practise that, I must keep this society in a stable condition. That is why political, social, and economic health of our society must be perfectly understood by our people to make their contributions for its health. In that society more people can become highly moral and highly spiritual. People can trust each other. What a beautiful idea of a society is that which has paraspara bhāva, 'mutuality and interdependence' which was taught in the third chapter! That is our aim. Democracy, which is political today, must become economic and social tomorrow. Such a democracy is a very beautiful conception which takes society closer to a spiritual democracy. India's democracy needs to have that spiritual direction. Then only will it truly be in keeping with our eternal spiritual tradition. So, that is the responsibility of our people. In the fourth volume of my book, The Eternal Values for a Changing Society, I have included, as the first lecture: 'Enlightened Citizenship and Our Democracy'. These subjects have been treated there. The title of the fourth volume is: 'Total Human Development Through Democracy'. You can get ordinary development in the form of more money, more comfort, and more of consumer goods, etc. But what about moral values, humanistic values, and spiritual development? That will alone make for a total development of men and women—economic, social, physical, mental and spiritual. That needs this Vedantic touch. That is highlighted in that lecture on 'Enlightened Citizenship and Our Democracy'.

Next line of the verse says: Jñātvā śāstravidhānoktam, 'having known whatever is told by the Śāstras'; karma kartum ihārhasi, 'you should do your actions in this light'. Based upon the understanding of what the śāstras say, you should act. For example, what does the Constitution say? I see a poor man is being persecuted by a strong rich man. What does the śāstra say for me? I have to protest against it. Then, my action will be according to the śāstra. Similarly, in spiritual life also, don't be too greedy, for then character falls away. A greedy life and character never go together. So, we want high character. Consumer mania must be therefore controlled. In this way, this great exhortation to follow the śāstra should be understood. All our people

must study the Constitution. What is our education worth if a student does not know what the Constitution of his or her country is? The knowledge of the Gītā along with the knowledge of each country's democratic political constitution will be a good guide for every citizen to take human evolution to its higher level, namely, total human fulfilment.

इति दैवासुरसम्पद्विभाग योगो नाम षोडशोऽध्यायः ।

Iti Daivāsurasampadvibhāga yogo nāma ṣoḍaśo'dhyāyaḥ —

'Thus ends the sixteenth chapter designated *The Classification of the Divine and the Non-divine Attributes.'*

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 17

Śraddhátraya-Vibhága-Yoga
The Enquiry into the Threefold Śraddhá

We have completed the sixteenth chapter of the *Gītā* last Sunday. And the chapter closed with the statement: *Tasmāt śāstram pramāṇam te kāryākārya vyavasthitau*, 'in all of your behaviour and conduct, you must depend upon the *śāstras*'. *Śāstra* is science. In physical life it is physical science. In inward life it is the spiritual science, the scientific scripture. The scriptures contain all directions for our life; so, depend upon the *śāstras* just as you depend upon the science of food for deciding your food intake. Then you will be better. If you misbehave with any of the organs of the body, they will revolt against you. They won't be your helpmates. So, follow the *śāstras* relating to the physical organs. So also, in inner life—in inner spiritual and moral life—follow the science of spirituality which tells you what to do and what not to do. That is the last instruction.

In that connection, I had told last Sunday that *śāstra* doesn't mean every written scripture. Things which are rational, which do not harm other people, only those passages in the *śāstras* can have that kind of validity. If a *śāstra* tells you to go and kill somebody, it has no validity. Some *śāstras* may contain such things also. But whatever is meant for one's own spiritual development *and* for the good of others, that alone can be a spiritual science. That is *śāstra* in the spiritual sense. Generally we deal with physical science, with physical *śāstra.* Follow physical science on the one side, and science of spirituality on the other. It will bring blessing to you and blessing to the world outside as well. This is the last statement in the sixteenth chapter.

The seventeenth chapter opens with a question from Arjuna.

अर्जुन उवाच –

Arjuna uvāca—

'Arjuna said:'

ये शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विता:।
तेषां निष्ठा तु का कृष्ण सत्त्वमाहो रजस्तम:॥१॥

Ye śāstravidhim utsṛjya yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ;
Teṣām niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa sattvamāho rajastamaḥ — 17. 1

'Those who, setting aside the ordinance of the *śāstra,* perform sacrifice with *śraddhā,* what is their condition, O Kṛṣṇa? (Is it) *sattva, rajas* or *tamas*?'

This whole chapter deals with human life and activities in the light of the three *guṇas—sattva, rajas,* and *tamas.* Whether you worship, or eat, or perform sacrifices, you will find in all these things, differences based on *sattva, rajas,* and *tamas* in the performer. Thus, the whole chapter, except for a few verses towards the end, deals with *guṇas—sattva, rajas,* and *tamas*—in the field of human life. So, Arjuna is asking this question: suppose a person does not follow any *śāstra,* but he or she has faith in one's heart, and is performing some religious worship, what is the nature of that person's life; is it *sāttvik, rājasik* or *tāmasik*? That is the question; *teṣām niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa,* 'O Kṛṣṇa, what is the status of that person'; *sattvamāho rajastamaḥ,* 'is it called *sāttvik, rājasik* or *tāmasik*?' That is the question of Arjuna.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच –

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said':

In a general statement, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनां सा स्वभावजा।
सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चेति तां शृणु॥२॥

Trividhā bhavati śraddhā dehinām sā svabhāvajā;
Sāttvikī rājasī caiva tāmasī ceti tām śṛṇu — 17. 2

‘Threefold is the *śraddhā* of the embodied, which is inherent in their nature—the *sāttvik,* the *rājasik,* and the *tāmasik.* Listen about it (from Me).’

The amount of psychological study that has gone into the making of this kind of statement reveals a careful study of the human mind, of the forces acting upon that mind, and the understanding that it is that mind which finds expression in actions and behaviour. So, the study of the mind is very essential. India had devoted a good deal of time to the study of the mind from the very beginning. The Sāṅkhya philosophy started it, and Vedanta took it over. So, India has achieved very high development in the field of psychology. We studied the sensory level and we found that it is the mind that directs the sensory system. Let us study that mind, we decided. That is how we developed psychology of a very high type. The West too had its psychology, but it was only of the external type—behaviourist psychology. It was purely from the external. A little depth psychology came with Freud who just peeped into the human mind a little and found it to be full of dirt—full of violence, sex and nothing else. From that time there has been a steady development of this peeping into the mind of a human personality. A deep study, and a still deeper study is going on in the West. And that study is being helped by the great study of the mind made by India ages ago. So, psychology is developing in the West from various angles today. Both as a curative science through psychiatry and psychoanalysis, and as a science of human nature, a pure science of the human personality—that development is going on. Here, in the *Gītā,* it is a wonderful study.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna*,* ‘you spoke of *śraddhā* or faith, O Arjuna, when you said that a person was doing his or her worship with faith—”I am worshipping with faith. I have not consulted any *śāstra.*” What is the nature of that worship?, that was your question’. To this Śrī Kṛṣṇa replies first with a general statement: *Trividhā bhavati śraddhā*, ‘*Śraddhā* belongs to three categories’; *dehinām,* ‘for all human beings’. A human being is described here using a very technical word—*dehī,* ‘one who has a body’; *deha* means ‘body’ and ‘one who lives in a body’ is called *dehī.* Just like the word *gṛhī* or householder; ‘one who lives in a *gṛha* or house’ is a *gṛhī.* Likewise, the body also is a *gṛha* for the indweller. The word *dehī* is a technical term for one living in a body. You are *not* the body; you are living *in* a body, that is all. You are handling the body or are being handled by it. So, that is the first

technical expression in this chapter. *Svabhāvajā,* 'born of one's own nature'. *Sā śraddhā*, 'that *śraddhā*' belongs to three categories. We have studied the word *svabhāva* earlier; there is an innate disposition in every human being. One mind is different from another mind. Various types of minds are there: minds coming out of past experiences, out of past actions, and from impact of the world upon the individual—all these make for the shaping of the mind. That state of the mind is called *svabhāva,* 'your own nature'. You can change it in future, but at present it is like what you find it to be. Therefore, the word 'disposition' is used by the psychologist, McDougall. The human disposition is the natural state of a particular human being. And one can alter it; one can improve it or go further down. All these are possible in the future; at present it is like 'this'. Now, that state of the mind is called *svabhāva.* Through that *svabhāva,* one gets *śraddhā.* That *śraddhā* is conditioned by the *svabhāva.* So, it is called *svabhāva-jā,* 'born out of one's own nature or *svabhāva*'. What are they? *Sāttvikī rājasī ca eva tāmasī ca iti tām śṛṇu,* 'there is a *sāttvikī śraddhā,* a *rājasī śraddhā*, and a *tāmasī śraddhā'.* 'Listen about them from Me', *tām śṛṇu,* says Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत।
श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः॥३॥

Sattvānurūpā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata;
Śraddhāmayo'yam puruṣo yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ—17. 3

'The *śraddhā* of each is according to his or her natural disposition, O descendent of Bharata. A person consists of his or her *śraddhā.* One is verily what one's *śraddhā* is.'

This is another general statement regarding every human being: *Sattvānurūpā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati,* 'the *śraddhā* of any individual will be in accordance with the mental disposition of the person concerned.' If one's mental disposition is different from that of another, then the *śraddhā* will also be different. So, *sattvānurūpā,* 'according to the nature of the mind of the individual'; *śraddhā bhavati,* 'will be the *śraddhā* manifested by that person.' The *śraddhā* of each is according to his or her *natural disposition.*

Then comes another statement: *Śraddhāmayo'yam puruṣo,* 'this human being is according to his or her *śraddhā*'. Whatever *śraddhā* one has within him or her, that is the disposition of the individual. *Yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ,* 'according to the *śraddhā* of the person, one is what one is in actual life.' So, there is a wonderful make up in the human mind. There you have this disposition and this *śraddhā,* and all your actions in *every* department of life will be based upon your disposition and the type of your *śraddhā.* Therefore, we follow the *śraddhā* apparatus that is there within ourselves. Now, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives a detailed exposition of the idea 'one is according to one's own *śraddhā*'.

यजन्ते सात्त्विका देवान्यक्षरक्षांसि राजसा:।
प्रेतान्भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जना:॥४॥

Yajante sāttvikā devān yakṣarakṣāmsirājasāḥ;
Pretān bhūtagaṇāmścānye yajante tāmasāḥ janāḥ— 17. 4

'*Sāttvik* people worship the *devas; rājasikas* worship the *yakṣas* and the *rākṣasas;* the others—the *tāmasik* people—worship the *pretas* and the hosts of *bhūtas.*'

Suppose someone is doing something in the name of religion. You can see behind that act, a particular *śraddhā.* This *śraddhā* varies from one individual to another. That variation is subject to the mental disposition or *svabhāva* of the person, which can be *sāttvik, rājasik* or *tāmasik.* According to that *svabhāva* will be the person's *śraddhā* in spiritual life, in worship, and the entity whom he or she worships.

Yajante sāttvikā devān, 'a *sāttvik* person worships benign, divine beings and powers', *devas* as we call them. Their tendency is to worship luminous divine beings, because these devotees have *sattva* element in them. *Yakṣarakṣāmsirājasāḥ*, 'those who are *rājasik* in their *śraddhā,* they worship the *yakṣas* and *rākṣasas*', who are types of supernatural beings. They are fierce and full of anger; that is why *rākṣasas* are called demoniac characters. The *rājasik* people like to worship such beings; that is their tendency. *Pretān bhūtagaṇāmścānye yajante tāmasāḥ janāḥ,* 'those who have a *tāmasik* mind, they like to worship the *bhūtas* and *pretas*'. They like

to worship all the ghoulish beings and the spirit of dead ancestors or ghosts. So, according to the mental disposition is the type of worship that one undertakes. This determination applies not only to worship but to *everything* one does. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving the example of even the kind of austerity or charity one does; these also will be determined by one's disposition. Worship is taken in this verse as the first example of the impact of one's disposition on our external action and behaviour. It is the mind that acts. If the mind is *sāttvik,* then the action will also be *sāttvik.* If the mind is *rājasik,* then the action will be *rājasik.* So also, if the mind is *tāmasik,* action too will be *tāmasik.* The central idea is therefore this: take care of the mental disposition. Try to improve it. There is no use in improving your action. *Rather, improve that force from which actions proceed.* This is a very profound idea in human life.

I read an English book long ago where it is said: one can change one's bad actions into good actions without changing the mental disposition that made him or her adopt evil actions. In that case, you will begin to perform evil once again! Just now you have stopped performing evil. But you have not stopped it permanently, because the mind which is its source is still inclined towards evil. So, that has no use at all. Deal with the root of the action. The root of action is the 'mental disposition'. Try to elevate that root to a higher level—from *tamas* to *rajas*, and from *rajas* to *sattva.* In this way, one can have a steady character. Otherwise, one is fine for five minutes and very charitable. The very next minute he or she may become ferocious and even kill people, because that nature which prompts one to perform evil actions is still there. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa makes this important statement here: all our *śraddhā* is based on our innate mental disposition. Take care of that mental disposition; that is more important than *merely* not doing this or doing that. The mind must be tackled in this context. In dealing with children also the same thing has to be done. There is no use in telling them, 'don't do this or that'. That mind which made that doing possible, must be made better and better. That kind of treatment must be given to the child concerned.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *pretān bhūtagaṇāmścānye yajante,* 'worshipping ghosts of the dead people or any type of *bhūtas* or ghoulish entities'.

In many religions and in many societies, all these things are found. We, in India, also had plenty of people doing such kinds of worship. Then great teachers came. They showed us a better form. They didn't condemn what we did. They only showed us that there is something better, something higher. By condemning someone, he or she is not going to desist from his or her actions. Educate him or her. That is what happened in India. Everything is there, but there is always a better and a still better, a purer and a still purer method. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks about *tapas*.

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः।
दम्भाहङ्कारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः॥५॥

Aśāstravihitam ghoram tapyante ye tapo janāḥ;
Dambhāhaṅkāra samyuktāḥ kāma rāga balānvitāḥ — 17. 5

'Those persons who practise severe austerities not enjoined by the *śāstras,* given to ostentation and egoism, endowed with the power of lust and attachment …'

In this verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa deals with *tapas* or austerity. Real *tapas* is what you get expounded by Śaṅkarācārya in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad.* Quoting a passage from *Yājñavalkya Smṛti,* Śaṅkarācārya gives one of the finest definitions of *tapas* or austerity. The *śloka* says: *Manasaśca indriyāṇām ca haikāgryam paramam tapaḥ,* 'the concentration of the energies of the mind and the sense organs is known as the supreme *tapas*.' Behind every achievement there is this *tapas,* without which no greatness can come. *Tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva,* 'realize the ultimate Truth, Brahman, through *tapas*', says the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*. And in the *Gītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa takes up this subject of *tapas* starting with physical *tapas,* then the *tapas* of speech, and then the *tapas* of mind. These are the three types of *tapas* which He will discuss.

Tapas usually means physical 'austerity', but it has a high meaning in the Vedantic context. It is not merely a physical austerity, but it is also austerity of speech and of the mind. Suppose, my mind is going down and I am trying to lift it up; that is real *tapas.* Selfish impulses come from within. I become aware, and I say, 'No, I won't allow you to come'. This kind of

alertness which constantly keeps the mind in a steady state, at a high level, is the mental *tapas.* It is called *jñāna-tapas,* the *tapas* of *jñāna.* But, many people do not do this. They do all sorts of *tapas.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa is dealing with that kind of *tapas* by classifying them into *sāttvik, rājasik* and *tāmasik.* Do not think that austerity is the same for all people. According to the mental disposition the austerity of the person will change.

Aśāstravihitam ghoram tapyante ye tapo janāḥ, 'some people perform austerity that are not at all sanctioned by the *śāstras,* the science of spiritual life'*; dambhāhaṅkāra samyuktāḥ,* 'endowed with *dambha* or arrogance and *ahamkāra* or egoism'; there is arrogance and egoism along with their *tapas*. That combination increases their egoism, and also increases their arrogance of mind. *Tapas* is meant to destroy arrogance and egoism. But in this case it just increases by that particular form of *tapas. Kāma rāga balānvitāḥ,* 'full of the force of *kāma* or lust and *rāga* or attachment'. Lust and attachment fill that kind of *tapas.* This is also done by the people of the world; there is a psychology behind it and that is from where the presence of *tamas* and *rajas* will be recognised.

कर्शयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः।
मां चैवान्तःशरीरस्थं तान्विद्ध्यासुरनिश्चयान्॥६॥

Karśayantaḥ śarīrastham bhūtagrāmam acetasaḥ;
Mām caivāntaḥśarīrastham tān viddhyāsura niścayān—17. 6

'Senseless as they are, they torture all the organs in the body, and Me who is dwelling in the body within; know them to be of *āsurik* resolve.'

Karśayantaḥ, 'one gives lot of pain to one's own body', which is unnecessary; *śarīrastham bhūtagrāmam acetasaḥ,* they give trouble 'to all the organs of the body, thoughtlessly.' And they are said to be doing *tapas* all the time! *Mām caivāntaḥśarīrastham,* 'they trouble Me also, who reside in their hearts'; *tān viddhi āsura niścayān,* 'know all such people to be of *āsurik* or demoniac determination'. They are not *sāttvik.* We can see this kind of religious practices in many societies. Even in the most modern society like America, so many people perform so many types of religious practices. About ten years ago it was reported that about eight hundred

followers of a *Guru,* an American, went away to Mexico, and everyone of them committed suicide. That is one type of *tapas.* There is no meaning at all in it. Such people are there; we have plenty of them in our own society also. It is not at all *śāstra vihitam,* 'sanctioned by scriptures'. Thereby they only bring trouble to all. That is the *āsurī* type of austerity. Then,

आहारस्त्वपि सर्वस्य त्रिविधो भवति प्रिय:।
यज्ञस्तपस्तथा दानं तेषां भेदमिमं शृणु॥७॥

Áhārastvapi sarvasya trividho bhavati priyaḥ;
Yajñastapastathā dānam teṣām bhedamimam śṛṇu— 17. 7

'The food also, which is liked by each of them, is threefold, as also *yajña,* austerity, and almsgiving. Listen to this distinction.'

About food also there is preference based upon the innate disposition which is threefold: *sāttvik, rājasik* and *tāmasik.* All these three types are there. *Áhārastvapi sarvasya trividho bhavati priyaḥ,* 'three types of choices of food is there by three types of human beings'. Similarly it is with *yajñaḥ,* 'sacrifice'; *tapas,* 'austerity'; *tathā dānam,* 'as also with charity'. Among those who perform sacrifices there are differences: *sāttvik, rājasik* and *tāmasik.* In *tapas* also, we have seen the difference between these three kinds of people. So, too, in charity you will find differences. *Teṣām bhedamimam śṛṇu,* 'hear from Me, these differences among them'. 'I am going to explain this to you', says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In charity or *dāna,* in austerity or *tapas,* in sacrifice or *yajña*, and in the food or *āhāra* we take everyday, in all these we can see the mind behind the act. *That is very important for us to know.* We all act, but our minds are different. I often quote from the great poem *Avimāra* of Bhāsā, the great Sanskrit poet, where it is said:

Prājñasya mūrkhasya ca kārya yoge
samatvam abhyeti tanuḥ na buddhiḥ—

'Here is a wise person and here is a foolish person; while both are working, their bodies are similar. But, inside, the minds are entirely different.'

The *prājña* has one type of mind and the *mūrkha* has another type of mind. However, when we look from outside, the bodies look similar. The

functions of the bodies also are similar. So, it is the mind, our reactions etc., that makes for our character. That mind has to be handled; it has to be trained. This is the greatest emphasis which we have in all our scriptures. Normally, we do not care what happens to the mind in the midst of an action. We are very worried about the action. But we must also see what reactions are created in the mind through that action. How is the mind being handled? How is it being shaped? Every action shapes the mind also, and not merely the external world. Today's robots affect only the external world when they perform some action. Inside the robot there is no change at all. There is no reshaping of itself in that system. It has no inner system. It has only some energy given to it. Very blind it is, and it functions accordingly. But a human being is not a robot. He or she has a mind, has an inner life; one can strengthen it or weaken it. One can make it good or bad. So, do not forget to take care of the mind in the midst of all your life and actions, and see how it is shaping itself in the course of action. *This is a very important teaching in the Gītā.* Out of this alone can come high character efficiency, coming out of day-to-day life and action.

Firstly, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling about the three kinds of food—*sāttvik, rājasik* and *tāmasik.* In this statement of the *Gītā* there is no particular item of food mentioned. It is only the quality of the food that you find mentioned. We people add our own ideas by choosing certain foods to be *tāmasik, rājasik,* or *sāttvik.* But the *Gītā* does not say so. The food that gives this quality is *rājasik.* Another quality is given by the *tāmasik* food; and yet another quality is given by *sāttvik* food. Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not identify the particular food item, because food is so various. What is food for one can be poison for another. So, you cannot take an item of food and say that it is *sāttvik.* That mistake we do often and call a particular food as *sāttvik, rājasik* or *tāmasik.* Whatever creates such and such conditions in the human mind, that alone is either *rājasik, tāmasik,* or *sāttvik.*

आयु:सत्त्वबलारोग्यसुखप्रीतिविवर्धना:।
रस्या: स्निग्धा: स्थिरा हृद्या आहारा: सात्त्विकप्रिया:॥८॥

Áyuḥ sattva balārogya sukha prītivivardhanāḥ;
Rasyāḥ snigdhāḥ sthirā hṛdyā āhārāḥ sāttvikapriyāḥ—17. 8

‘The foods which augment vitality, energy, strength, health, cheerfulness, and appetite, which are savoury and oleaginous, substantial and agreeable, are liked by the *sāttvik.*’

Some types of foods are preferred by a *sāttvik* mind. What are these? These are foods that possess the following characteristics. It is not a list of items, but it is a list of characteristics. Any food that produces such and such an effect in your mind is *sāttvik.* What are those effects? Foods that augment ‘vitality’, *āyuḥ*. Foods must not cut your life span down. It must give one long life. Next, whenever you eat food, you must feel that you are getting *sattva* or ‘energy’ out of it. Food must supply energy to the body and the mind. Food is also meant to strengthen the body. *Bala* means ‘strength’. Food must make one strong. Foods that do not supply these is not meant for a *sāttvik* type of person. Next, *ārogya* or ‘health’; and *sukha,* or ‘cheerfulness’; food must give cheerfulness; it should not make one sad, depressed, or apathetic. That kind of food is of no use at all. So, these are the conditions given. Similarly, food should be appetising, *prīti vivardhanāḥ*; then only it is interesting to eat. Food also must be ‘savoury’, *rasyāḥ*; there must be some kind of energising liquid inside the food. Food must also be ‘oleaginous,’ *snigdhāḥ;* ‘substantial’, *sthirā;* and ‘agreeable‘ or ‘satisfying to the heart’, *hṛdyā*. If the very look of the food is disgusting, such food is not taken by *sāttvik* people. *Áhārāḥ sāttvika priyāḥ,* ‘such foods are very much preferred by *sāttvik* people’. This can be understood and appreciated better when we consider the other two types of food.

कट्वम्ललवणात्युष्णतीक्ष्णरूक्षविदाहिनः।
आहारा राजसस्येष्टा दुःखशोकामयप्रदाः॥९॥

Kaṭvamla lavaṇātyuṣṇa tīkṣṇa rūkṣa vidāhinaḥ;
Áhārā rājasasyeṣṭā duḥkha śokāmaya pradāḥ— 17. 9

‘The foods that are bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, pungent, dry, and burning, are liked by the *rājasik,* and are productive of pain, grief, and disease.’

The *rājasik* type of mind will like to have foods which are *kaṭuḥ,* ‘bitter’; *amla,* ‘sour’; *lavaṇa,* ‘saline’; *ati uṣṇa,* ‘excessively hot to taste’;

tīkṣṇa, 'pungent'; *rūkṣa,* 'dry'; and *vidāhinaḥ,* 'burning'. Such foods are 'productive of pain or *duḥkha*, grief or *śoka,* and disease or *āmaya*', *duḥkha śokāmaya pradāḥ.* Once in a while you may take food which is hot to taste, but if you take it often, it may create trouble in the stomach. The stomach walls are delicate and may get burned by eating excessively hot substances. That is possible. Yet this is the preference of the *rājasik* mind. There is no gain in lecturing to such a person on the demerits of such food. His or her mind is intent on that kind of food; that is the mental disposition. Even you can see this in children. You give three types of food to children, and each will choose that food which corresponds to its inner disposition. From this we can make generalisations: this state of mind will be inclined to that kind of food.

यातयामं गतरसं पूति पर्युषितं च यत्।
उच्छिष्टमपि चामेध्यं भोजनं तामसप्रियम्॥१०॥

Yātayāmam gatarasam pūti paryuṣitam ca yat;
Ucchiṣṭamapi cāmedhyam bhojanam tāmasa priyam—17. 10

'That which is stale, tasteless, stinking, cooked overnight, refuse, and impure, is the food liked by the *tāmasik.*'

People with a very *tāmasik* frame of mind do not want to work hard, do not want to struggle. What kind of food do such lazy people prefer? *Yātayāmam,* 'stale food', food that is old and stale; *gata rasam,* 'tasteless'; *pūti,* 'stinking'; *paryuṣitam,* 'cooked overnight'; *ucchiṣṭam,* 'refuse'; and *āmedhyam,* 'impure'—such type of food is chosen by the *tāmasik* type of people, because of their laziness and lack of desire to work hard. They accept what comes without labour. Their tendency is in that direction.

These are the three types of people—*sāttvik, rājasik* and *tāmasik*—and the type of food liked by each of these kinds. There is no particular food mentioned here in these verses; what is mentioned is the quality of food that one takes. *Sāttvik* minds will emphasize on cleanliness; they will ask: 'Is it clean?' When you look at the food item, it must be attractive.

अफलाकांक्षिभिर्यज्ञो विधिदृष्टो य इज्यते।
यष्टव्यमेवेति मनः समाधाय स सात्त्विकः॥११॥

Aphalākāmkṣibhiḥ yajño vidhidṛṣṭo ya ijyate;
Yaṣṭavyam eveti manaḥ samādhāya sa sāttvikaḥ— 17. 11

'That *yajña* is *sāttvik* which is performed by those desiring no fruit, as enjoined by ordinance, with their minds fixed on the *yajña* only, for its own sake.'

Next, Śrī Kṛṣṇa takes up *yajña.* Three kinds of minds will take up three kinds of sacrifices. *Yajña* is of the *sāttvik* type when it is performed 'by men or women desiring no fruit', *aphalākāmkṣibhiḥ.* I do *yajña* out of pure dedication, and not to make money out of it. That is one characteristic that is emphasized: no desire for fruit. And then it should be *vidhidṛṣṭo,* 'as enjoined by the *śāstra*'. They follow what is ordained by the *śāstra*; *manaḥ samādhāya*, 'with the mind fixed on the *yajña* alone'; *yaśtavyam eva iti*, 'with the attitude to perform the *yajña* for its own sake'. They do not perform the sacrifices with any other intention. This is the *sāttvik* mind. Any worship done by one of *sāttvik* mind will be of this nature.

अभिसन्धाय तु फलं दम्भार्थमपि चैव यत्।
इज्यते भरतश्रेष्ठ तं यज्ञं विद्धि राजसम्॥१२॥

Abhisandhāya tu phalam dambhārthamapi caiva yat;
Ijyate bharataśreṣṭha tam yajñam viddhi rājasam — 17. 12

'That which is performed, O best of the Bhāratas, seeking the fruit thereof and for ostentation, know it to be a *rājasik yajña.*'

A *rājasik* type of *yajña* has the following qualifications: *abhisandhāya tu phalam,* 'that which is performed seeking its fruits'. There is the idea: I want to gain something by performing this particular sacrifice. Then there will be 'plenty of show or ostentation', *dambhārtham.* Other people must admire saying, 'so and so has done a great *yajña.*' That ostentation is very important to the *rājasik* mind. It is just as we have it in marriages—what a tremendous ostentation to show that one is doing something on a grand scale, to show that one is a rich person thereby. Recently, there was a

newspaper report of a tremendous Mumbai marriage where about five crores were spent. Plenty of ostentation was there. Even the invitation letter cost fifteen rupees each!

So, this ostentation is a product of a *rājasik* state of mind. In any department of life, such a mind will like show. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'Say, a worship is going on. A *rājasik* devotee will come dressed up in fine silk, wearing many golden ornaments on the body, various unguents and all that. Then he or she will sit for worship.' God doesn't care for all this nonsense. But this devotee wants to worship that way, because the *śraddhā* inside forces him or her to do that way. One cannot escape that. He or she is doing just according to one's *śraddhā.* So, this is the second type, the *rājasik* type.

विधिहीनमसृष्टान्नं मन्त्रहीनमदक्षिणम्।
श्रद्धाविरहितं यज्ञं तामसं परिचक्षते॥१३॥

Vidhihīnam asṛṣṭānnam mantrahīnam adakṣiṇam;
Śraddhāvirahitam yajñam tāmasam paricakṣate — 17. 13

'The *yajña* performed without heed to ordinance, in which no food is distributed, which is devoid of *mantras,* gifts, and *śraddhā,* is said to be *tāmasik.*'

Tāmasik yajña has these qualities: *vidhihīnam,* 'performed without any heed to the *śāstra*'; he or she does not respect any ordinance and performs *yajña* according to one's own sweet will and pleasure. *Asṛṣṭānnam,* 'no food is distributed' in that *yajña*. It is very important to have feeding of poor and holy people. That is the custom. But, this is not done by a *tāmasik* person. *Mantra hīnam,* 'devoid of *mantras*'; *adakṣiṇam,* 'devoid of gifts'; and *śraddhāvirahitam,* 'devoid of *śraddhā*'. The essentials of a *yajña* which are required to make a *yajña* satisfactory, are absent. This *tāmasik* person does not care for all these essentials. He or she simply does what is thought to be right. That *yajña* is known to be *tāmasik.* So, *yajña* and food, both are of three types. Now comes description of *tapas* or austerity:

देवद्विजगुरुप्राज्ञपूजनं शौचमार्जवम्।
ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसा च शारीरं तप उच्यते॥१४॥

Deva dvija guru prājña pūjanam śaucam ārjavam;
Brahmacaryam ahimsā ca śārīram tapa ucyate — 17. 14

'Worship of the gods, the twice-born, the *gurus,* and the wise; purity, straight-forwardness, continence, and non-injury are called the austerity of the body.'

What is physical *tapas?* These are called *śārīram tapa,* 'the austerity of the body'. What are they? *Pūjanam,* 'honouring or worshipping' these four: *deva* or 'god'; *dvija* or 'born anew'; that is the meaning of *dvija*. The holy person, or *brāhmaṇa* or the one who has gone beyond the physical life into a higher life, is a *dvija.* It means a double-birth; there is a physical birth and there is a spiritual birth. Those who had received spiritual birth were known as *brāhmaṇas* in this country, though today it refers to the genetic type of *brāhmaṇas* which has absolutely no meaning. But, those who have achieved the second birth into the spiritual dimension of life are the real *dvijas,* i.e., 'twice born'. So, such a one is called a *brāhmaṇa,* and people worship them in any country. A *brāhmaṇa* who has achieved this spiritual rebirth will be honoured in every country. The first birth is given by the parents; the second birth is given by the *guru.* That is why the *guru* is highly honoured.

Then comes the worship of *guru* and *prājña,* '*guru* and learned persons'; *guru* must be worshipped and so also *prājña* or 'learned persons' are to be honoured. In any healthy society all these people will get honour spontaneously without any dictate from the scriptures or the State. It is because we love them and respect them. We look up to them.

Then, *śaucam,* 'purity' at the physical level; *ārjavam,* 'straight-forwardness' or honesty; *ṛju* means 'straight' and its opposite is *kuṭila* which means 'crooked'; *ārjavam* comes from that word *ṛju* or 'straight-forwardness'.

Then comes *brahmacaryam,* 'continence', restraint in physical life; *ahimsā,* 'nonviolence', not harming people, animals or nature. All this will

come under *ahimsā*—a very remarkable virtue for any civilized society. *Himsā* is not a part of a civilized society. But *himsā is* there in society because people have not trained themselves, have not disciplined themselves. So, let this physical discipline be resorted to by people, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. These are called *śārīram tapa,* '*tapas* of the body'. What a beautiful idea! In any society consisting of self-disciplined people, there will not be any need for too many police. Why is there a police station in every area of the town? Because there are so many evil people around. But that is not the correct way. If you undertake this kind of *tapas*, then there will be less of this external imposition of discipline. When I am disciplined myself, there is no need for anyone else to discipline me. So, these are the disciplines we need in a society. We have completely missed it in modern society. There is so very little *tapas* in society; there is so much of violence, all sorts of delinquencies, and so much of unhappiness and lack of peace in society.

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत्।
स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते॥१५॥

Anudvegakaram vākyam satyam priyahitam ca yat;
Svādhyāyābhyasanam caiva vāṅmayam tapa ucyate—17. 15

'Speech which causes no vexation, and which is true, as also agreeable and beneficial, and regular study of the Vedas—these are said to form the austerity of speech.'

Manu Smṛti also contains a similar instruction on the question of *vāṅmaya tapas*. It says: *satyam brūyāt*, 'speak what is true'*; priyam brūyāt,* 'speak what is really pleasant' to the people concerned; *mā brūyāt satyam apriyam,* 'do not speak truth which is unpalatable' to the listener, because it would otherwise cause suffering to that person. Though a thing is true, do not say it out since it is *apriyam* or unpleasant. Suppose there is a blind man or woman, do not address him or her saying, 'O blind person!' It is *satyam,* but it is extremely *apriyam.* You are only causing anguish in the mind of that blind person. Whatever is true must be spoken, but try to bring happiness and cheer to people through your speech. However, do not speak what is untrue though it is pleasant; that should not be done. That is the instruction given by *Manu Smṛti.*

Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *anudvegakaram vākyam,* 'your speech should not excite other people'. Don't disturb their peace of mind. Try to speak in that way. That is the first element of *tapas* of speech. Similarly, that speech should be 'true', *satyam;* never speak what is not true. That is the second quality. And then, *priyam,* 'what is pleasant to hear'; and *hitam,* 'which is meant for the listener's welfare'. *Priyam* and *hitam* go together—it is nice to hear and it is also good for the listener's development. *Svādhyāyābhyasanam caiva,* 'regular study of the spiritual books' to keep the mind in a good state; *vāṅmayam tapa ucyate*, 'this is called the *tapas* of speech'.

There is the body, the mind and the speech. Three types of our reactions are there—physical, vocal, and mental. What is said in this verse refers to speech, one of the important instruments for making or unmaking of human societies. Bad speech can ruin society. Good speech can improve the social situation. So, people must weigh their words when they speak. *Sāttvik* people will do that. This is called *tapas* of speech or *vāk*. 'I shall speak only what is true; if it is not true, or if I do not know whether it is true, I will not speak at all'. Silence is better than speech. But when I speak, I shall weigh every word. What a discipline it is to the human mind! In fact, in all our scientific thinking, whatever is true, that alone will be spoken. In moral thinking, what is beneficial to all alone shall be spoken. What a beautiful idea of controlling speech, of purifying speech! In many of our books there is a tremendous emphasis on the discipline of speech, because speech is the one instrument of communication between one human being and another in society. The way we handle this instrument called speech can make for happiness or unhappiness. So, we should be careful in uttering words. This is a tremendous responsibility. Most people do not care for it. Whatever occurs to their minds, they fire it, and go on creating trouble everywhere. More evil comes by speech than by action. We can break a whole family by a wrong speech. All this we can see, especially in politics. A wrong speech can make a whole political situation extremely complicated. So, 'restrain speech' is a great teaching given in Vedanta.

How much suffering is inflicted only through this instrument of speech! You need not physically beat a person; you speak harshly about him or her, accuse or abuse him or her, and that is enough to destroy that person's

peace. Speech is an important instrument which we have achieved as a human being. No animal has the capacity for speech. So, this tremendous capacity needs to be disciplined. There is a very great stress in the whole of *Sanātana Dharma* tradition on disciplining of speech.

As I quoted before, Śaṅkarācārya has said in the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (verse 367)*: Yogasya prathama dvāram vāṅnirodhaḥ*, 'the first doorway to *yoga* is discipline of speech'. That is a wonderful language. Whatever is sweet and good for the people, which is truthful, which is for the welfare of all, utter only such words. This human tongue is the abode of the Goddess of speech, Sarasvatī Herself. That is the theory in India. So, you have to tell every child, 'make your speech of this nature: that which is truthful, agreeable, and beneficial'. That is a good discipline for our children today. If things are bad today, it is because we never cared. All that is *vāṅmaya tapas,* '*tapas* with respect to speech'. *Vāk* is the word meaning 'word' or 'speech'. I think we in India need a lot of this *tapas.* How to control the tongue that can make or break human relations? Therefore it is said, 'lashing with the tongue'. That is what a very bad tongue does and brings unhappiness to many people. Therefore, be careful says Śrī Kṛṣṇa here.

मनःप्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः।
भावसंशुद्धिरित्येतत्तपो मानसमुच्यते॥१६॥

Manaḥ prasādaḥ saumyatvam maunam ātma vinigrahaḥ;
Bhāva samśuddhiriti etat tapo mānasam ucyate— 17. 16

'Serenity of mind, kindliness, silence, self-control, honesty of motive—this is called the mental austerity.'

This is called *mānasam tapas,* '*tapas* at the mental level'. How can one do *tapas* at the mental level? *Tapas* means 'struggling to make oneself better and better'. The mind is going down, there is a depression at that time, and you bring it up; one must ask oneself: 'why should the mind be disturbed? It must be serene'. It is a constant struggle. Somebody abused me and went away. He or she may have forgotten it, but I am culturing it and I am getting depressed. I go down and farther down. That should not be. I must be able to discriminate, throw the whole thing away and restore

my serenity again. That struggle is *tapas*. Every day we need it for our own good. That is what people must realize.

Mind has a tendency to be broken at times into an unhappy choppy state. Make it more and more serene. That action, that effort, is *tapas.* In *manaḥ prasāda, prasāda* means 'calmness and serenity'; thus, calmness & serenity of mind is called *manaḥ prasāda.* When somebody comes to you, he or she will not feel depressed on seeing you. That person will feel encouraged by seeing you, because you are so serene in your being. So, one fact of human society is that, whatever we are, can either make others unhappy or happy. That is so because we are in a society. Suppose you have somebody at home who is always apathetic, with no interest in anything, always condemning things that are going on around. That will make for tremendous unhappiness for everybody. So, we have to remember that we are interacting with other people. Let us therefore interact at a better level, at a happy level. Therefore, serenity of mind is mentioned in this verse.

Next is mentioned *saumyatvam* or 'kindliness', softness, the attitude of welcome towards others. One should not be crude and rough. You will find some people to be crude and rough; but, why should they be so? They have not purified their minds. Therefore, they are rough. Civilized behaviour requires to be *saumya* or gentle. When somebody comes, welcome that person and speak a few kind words. This way the mind should be trained.

Then comes, *maunam* or 'silence'; it means a thoughtful situation with the mind active in thinking. That is called *maunam.* It is not necessarily silence; it means to speak only when there is something worthwhile to speak. Rest of the time one can be silent. A person is silent because he or she has the great power of thinking. I have always expressed the idea that speech and thought are in inverse ratio. More thought, less speech; less thought, more speech. And so, we have to train the mind. Let us talk only when there is something worthwhile to talk. Otherwise, let us be calm and quiet. That will do great good to the world. According to Śaṅkarācārya, *manana śakti* is *maunam*, 'silence is thinking capacity'. So, occasional silence is also beautiful. We are talking a lot in society, but when we get an opportunity, let us be silent. Don't disturb the peace of the world by your talk. Very often that happens. Therefore, *maunam* is a tremendous discipline

of the mind. We in India are the most chattering people in the world, and life is getting empty thereby. So, *maunam* has a remarkable value in our lives. So much energy is wasted in talking; conserve it and make that energy available for *manana* or thinking and for action. That is how *tapas* enables you to develop your personality energy. One should not waste energy; one should not scatter it. One should concentrate it. Therefore, this idea of *maunam* comes there. That is the idea of 'silence'.

Átmavinigrahaḥ means 'self-control', a disciplined mind. This mind has disciplined itself. And with that mind we are disciplining our sensory energies, for that mind is the only instrument. So, first the mind should learn how to discipline itself. That struggle at self-control is *tapas*. When we have full self-control, then we don't need *tapas,* because that becomes natural to us. Because it is not natural for us now, we have to struggle for it. That struggle is called *tapas*.

Next comes, *bhāva samśuddhiḥ* which means 'honesty of motive', 'purity of resolve'. The opposite of it is crookedness. *Bhāva* is mental disposition. That must be made pure; it should not be dirty, filled with evil. That is what is meant by *bhāvasamśuddhiḥ*.

Iti etat, 'all this'; *tapo,* 'austerity'; *mānasam ucyate,* 'is called (*tapas*) of the mind'. If we get even a little of this quality of mind, we can make inter-human relations happy and fruitful. We have seen in these three verses, austerity—physical, verbal and mental. The next few verses deal with the threefold austerity, and *dāna* or charity.

श्रद्धया परया तप्तं तपस्तत्त्रिविधं नरैः।
अफलाकांक्षिभिर्युक्तैः सात्त्विकं परिचक्षते॥१७॥

Śraddhayā parayā taptam tapastat trividham naraiḥ;
Aphalākāṅkṣibhiḥ yuktaiḥ sāttvikam paricakṣate — 17. 17

'This threefold austerity, if practised by steadfast people, with great *śraddhā,* desiring no fruit, is said to be *sāttvik.*'

When these three types of *tapas*—physical, verbal, and mental—are done with a particular attitude of mind, that is called *sāttvik tapas*. With

another attitude, it is called *rājasik,* and with yet another attitude, it is called *tāmasik.*

Śraddhayā parayā taptam, 'all this *tapas* is done with supreme *śraddhā*', with supreme faith in oneself, faith in the truth of the world, truth of the existence of life. In all these one develops a new positive outlook. That is called *śraddhā.* Śaṅkarācārya defines it as 'a totality of positive attitudes', *āstikya buddhi*, in Sanskrit. When we deal with a negative mind, we do not feel happy at all; we don't feel encouraged at all. We become depressed dealing with negative minds. Dealing with positive minds, we feel better. Here this *śraddhā* comes in—a mind that is positive. *Parayā* means 'with great'; *śraddhayā*, '*śraddhā*'; *taptam,* with great *śraddha* 'all this *tapas* is performed'. What kind of *tapas*? *Tapastat trividham,* 'this threefold *tapas*'—of body, speech and mind—which was described earlier; performed by whom?, *yuktaiḥ naraiḥ,* 'by steadfast persons'; and *aphalākāṅkṣibhiḥ,* 'who do not expect any return'. I shall not seek any profit out of it—that attitude. *Sāttvikam paricakṣate,* 'is called *sāttvik.*' The same austerity is called *sāttvik* when performed with the attitude, 'I am not going to make any profit out of it; it is my nature to express myself in these ways'. When we were children, we did something and asked our father and mother to give us a present for having done that. 'I have done something; now give me a present.' Children always want a present for anything they do. Mature minds do not want it. They are good, for being good; they like to be good. That attitude makes for a *sāttvik* state of mind.

सत्कारमानपूजार्थं तपो दम्भेन चैव यत्।
क्रियते तदिह प्रोक्तं राजसं चलमध्रुवम्॥१८॥

Satkāramānapūjārtham tapo dambhena caiva yat;
Kriyate tadiha proktam rājasam calam adhruvam— 17. 18

'That austerity which is practised with the object of gaining welcome, honour, and worship, and with ostentation, is here said to be *rājasik,* unstable and transitory.'

Satkāramānapūjārtham, people who do all this but 'with a view to get *satkāra*, *māna*, and *pūja*'. *Satkāra* means a kind word, an appreciation, a

welcome by people around; *māna* is 'honour'; and *pūjā,* 'worship'. Further, it is done *dambhena caiva,* 'also with ostentation', 'with arrogance'; that austerity which is practised with the object of gaining welcome, honour and worship, and with ostentation, is said to be *rājasik. Rājasik* type of austerity manifests itself in this form. It is *calam,* 'never steady'; and *adhruvam,* 'transitory'. It comes and goes; that is the nature of *rājasik* austerity. But *sāttvik* type of austerity is steady and remains the same.

मूढग्राहेणात्मनो यत्पीडया क्रियते तपः।
परस्योत्सादनार्थं वा तत्तामसमुदाहृतम्॥१९॥

Mūḍhagrāheṇa ātmano yat pīḍayā kriyate tapaḥ;
Parasyotsādanārtham vā tat tāmasam udāhṛtam— 17. 19

'That austerity which is practised out of a foolish notion, with self-torture or for the purpose of ruining another, is declared to be *tāmasik.*'

Some *tāmasik* people perform *tapas.* Why do they do so? They do so 'out of a foolish notion', *mūḍhagrāheṇa,* and not out of a real understanding. Just a foolish notion arises in the mind, and they do *tapas.* And they do self-torture, *ātmano yat pīḍayā*, by 'torturing the body'. That kind of attitude which finds expression in the form of acts where they pierce a needle through the skin, and pull a cart, etc. All this is *tapas* which some people do, but it is all a *tāmasik* form of *tapas.* Or, they perform *tapas* 'for the purpose of ruining other people', *parasyotsādanārtham*. That also people do. They call it *māṭṭā māraṇa* in Tamil. Such a person is also doing *tapas*, but the motive is to harm others. This is considered to be *tāmasik* type of *tapas.* Here body, speech and mind are controlled but for the purpose of harming people. And it is all foolishly done. That is how *tāmasik tapas* comes into the picture.

Next, Śrī Kṛṣṇa takes up *dānam,* 'charity'. There are three types of charity. The first one is:

दातव्यमिति यद्दानं दीयतेऽनुपकारिणे।
देशे काले च पात्रे च तद्दानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम्॥२०॥

Dātavyam iti yaddānam dīyate anupakāriṇe;

Deśe kāle ca pātre ca taddānam sāttvikam smṛtam— 17. 20

‘“To give is right”—gift given with this idea, to one who can do no service in return, in a fit place, time, and to a worthy person, that gift is held to be *sāttvik.*’

In this verse Śrī Kṛṣṇa discusses *dāna* or charity or gift which is *sāttvik.* There is a whole hymn on *dāna* in the *Ìg-Veda.* It is called *dāna stuti. Dāna* was a great idea developed in India. Always share what you have with others. It is very much emphasized in all our literature. So, *dāna* has a high place: ‘I have something; somebody does not have it; let me share, let me give it to another who does not have it.’ India was known for this quality of charity and hospitality for centuries together. Anyone could travel all over India without carrying a single pie in one’s pocket. You would be looked after by people everywhere. That is the story of India. How many pilgrims have travelled, millions of them, to go to centres of pilgrimage. On the way, people looked after them. They served the pilgrims. This is called *dāna.* The whole thing was so natural. The person who did *dāna* felt elevated by serving such people. This was the condition for ages in this country. People used to go to Benares walking all the way in a year. On the way, these people were looked after by local people. And on reaching Benares, they were looked after there also. They returned in a similar way. This procedure had been followed for ages; there was a stress on *dāna*. But conditions have changed now.

Dātavyam iti yaddānam, ‘gift given with the attitude, “ I feel inclined to give, I feel it is worth giving”’, is *sāttvik.* Gifts are given with the attitude ‘to give is right’. To whom is gift given? *Dīyate anupakāriṇe,* ‘to one who cannot do service in return’. If you expect something from the served and if the served has the capacity to do that return service, then there is no *dāna* idea there. It becomes only a mutual contract, a business contract. That is all; there is not that high ideal of *dāna* in it. But, in true *dāna,* the recipient is not in a position to give anything in return; he or she needs service, and I offer service or give charity to him or her with respect. *Upakāri* means one who gives something in return for the good you do to him or her. But, here it is *an-upakāri,* which makes it negative, ‘one who cannot give a return gift’. Then only *dāna* is *sāttvik.*

Deśe kāle ca pātre ca, 'taking into consideration *deśa* or place*, kāla* or time, and *pātra* or the particular individual'. These things should be taken into account. If you perform charity with right attitude and considering these three factors, then it is *sāttvik* charity.

यत्तु प्रत्युपकारार्थं फलमुद्दिश्य वा पुनः।
दीयते च परिक्लिष्टं तद्दानं राजसं स्मृतम्॥२१॥

Yattu pratyupakārārtham phalamuddiśya vā punaḥ;
Dīyate ca parikliṣṭam taddānam rājasam smṛtam— 17. 21

'And what is given with a view to receiving in return, or looking for the fruit, or again reluctantly, that gift is held to be *rājasik.*'

Rājasik charity has these qualities: *yattu pratyupakārārtham,* 'what is given with a view to receiving in return'; there is this motivation in giving gifts: I give this to you and I expect this in return from you. There *rājasik* mind plays a part. Or, *phalamuddiśya,* 'looking for the fruits of action'; in this case, there is attachment to the fruits of *dāna; dīyate ca parikliṣṭam,* and often gifts are 'given reluctantly'.

I remember a particular instance of this 'giving reluctantly'. In Burma, when we were there in 1940-42, there were Buddhist merchants and Hindu merchants who promised donation to our popular Ramakrishna Mission hospital. To collect that donation a Swami used to go to these merchants. As soon as the Swami went, the Buddhist merchant would immediately offer the money and thank the Swami. The matter would be over quickly. But if the Swami went to the Hindu merchant, he would invariably say, 'come tomorrow', or 'come day after tomorrow'. That was natural with the Hindu merchant then. Never will a Buddhist do that. They know the way of charity. They respect it. But, the other, the Hindu merchant, did it reluctantly and most unwillingly. If you have something to give, give it. 'That monk had to come a long distance to receive the gift. These monks also are busy people serving the afflicted in the hospital'—that attitude was not there.

When I was in Mysore, in 1929-30, we collected funds for feeding the poor on the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. One day, I went to a professor, a

good friend. He said, 'I don't believe in God and religion. So, I don't want to give in charity for God and religion. But, of course, I believe in Gaṇeśa.' And then he said, 'Since you have come, I must give something.' Then he took out his cheque book. I thought he would write something wonderful—10,000 or 1000, or at least 100 rupees. One Rupee, he wrote on the cheque! Most unwillingly given. I also studied the whole thing. You can study human character in these actions. So, what the *Gītā* says is not imagination; it is an actual human situation. The attitude that is prominent in such people is: 'I wish I had not to give'!

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here, 'what is given with a view to receiving in return, or looking for the fruit, again given reluctantly, that gift is held to be *rājasik.*' I am glad to say that during the past few years there has been a change in India. A little more of *sāttvik* type of charity has started. Formerly, for performing some good work, one had to run after moneyed persons. *Now I find moneyed people running after good work*. They say, 'I have money. Can you do good work with that money?' *That kind of welcome change has taken place*, and I am very happy with this change. More of *sāttvik* charity is appearing on the social horizon.

अदेशकाले यद्दानमपात्रेभ्यश्च दीयते।
असत्कृतमवज्ञातं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम्॥२२॥

Adeśakāle yaddānam apātrebhyaśca dīyate;
Asat kṛtam avajñātam tat tāmasam udāhṛtam— 17. 22

'The gift that is given at the wrong place or time, to unworthy persons, without regard or with disdain, that is declared to be *tāmasik.*'

Adeśakāle yaddānam, 'the gift that is given at the wrong place and time'; *apātrebhyaḥ,* 'to unworthy persons'; *asat kṛtam*, 'without regard or respect'; and *avajñātam*, 'with disdain'; *tat tāmasam udāhṛtam,* 'that is declared to be *tāmasik*'. That *rājasik* attitude has degenerated still further and has become *tāmasik.*

One illustration comes to my mind. I generally do not carry any money in my pocket when I travel abroad. An air ticket would be there; somebody would receive me at the end of the journey, and therefore, I never carried

money with me. But sometimes difficulties arose; twice or thrice it happened. One was in Sydney when I reached there from USA. When I landed, there was nobody to receive me. Some misunderstanding was there; the hosts were expecting me to arrive the next day. That was because you lose or gain a day when you cross the international dateline. Because of that misunderstanding, nobody came to receive me. So, I was there at the Sydney airport with no money in the pocket. I saw a man doing some business in a corner. I went to him and asked him, 'Can you give me ten cents for making a phone call?' Most unwillingly, in a very unhappy state of mind, he looked at me and said, 'No, I won't give'. Then I said, 'My friends will come and I shall return the money. Please give.' But that man was most unhappy to part with even a single cent. After a little while, he took out twenty cents and threw it towards me, and said, 'you take it'. 'Very good,' I said, and took it. Then I phoned, and people came within forty-five minutes, and I wanted to return the amount. But he would not accept it for he had thrown it away. And that is one experience.

The same thing happened in Amsterdam. There they allowed me to phone when I said my friends would come and they would repay the amount. I phoned to that person, Dr. Rama Polderman, who is in the audience here today. And within a few minutes they came and returned the money to that person. So, in all these experiences, you will find that you meet with people all over the world who do this kind of charity in a very deserving case, unwillingly or willingly, according to the descriptions that are given in these verses of the *Gītā.*

We should think of it deeply. Charity must be done with a generous mind, with an open hand, not with a hand that is drawn back. There is a beautiful exposition of this idea of *dāna* in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* where there is a convocation address of a Sanskrit educational institution. It is a beautiful passage. Some of the universities in Nagpur and other places use it in their convocation today. The passage says about the subject of *dāna* as follows (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, I. xi. 3):

Śraddhayā deyam, 'whatever you give' in charity, 'give it with *śraddhā*', with faith. *Aśraddhayā adeyam,* 'without that *śraddhā,* don't give'; don't do charity that way, for its value goes down. Then *śriyā deyam,*

‘give with a sense of plenty’. You may be giving only five rupees, but give it with a sense of plenty. *Bhiyā deyam*, ‘give with fear’ for the cause is so great and the amount of donation made is so small. *Hriyā deyam,* ‘give with humility’. *Hrī* means humility. What a big project! And I am so small; how can I give so little? That sense of humility should be there while giving in charity. *Samvidā deyam*, ‘give with knowledge’. Give with the knowledge of the purpose for which the gift is being made. You appreciate the project and then give for that project.

These are the descriptions given in the *Taittirīya* Convocation Address about ‘giving’ or *dāna.* The Address started with the words *satyam vada,* ‘speak the truth’*; dharmam cara,* ‘follow the righteous way’*; svādhyāyāt mā pramadaḥ,* ‘don’t give up learning and teaching’. This is how it begins. Then comes this idea of charity or giving with respect. When you give something to somebody, that somebody’s self-respect should not be wounded. Then only it is right charity. If it hurts the receiver’s self-respect, then it is bad. So, this kind of attitude must come to the mind so that this world can become a happier place to live in and we can achieve our fulfilment in society.

Thus, these are the descriptions of the various types of *āhāra* or food, *yajña* or sacrifice, *tapas* or austerity, and *dāna* or charity.

ॐ तत्सदिति निर्देशो ब्रह्मणस्त्रिविधः स्मृतः।
ब्राह्मणास्तेन वेदाश्च यज्ञाश्च विहिताः पुरा॥२३॥

Om tat sat iti nirdeśo brahmaṇastrividhaḥ smṛtaḥ;
Brāhmaṇāḥ tena vedāśca yajñāśca vihitāḥ purā — 17. 23

‘“*Om, Tat, Sat*”: this has been declared to be the triple designation of Brahman. By That were made the *brāhmaṇas*, the Vedas, and the *yajñas* in the days of yore.’

The name of the supreme Reality, Brahman, is *Om Tat Sat. Om tat sat iti nirdeśo*, ‘*Om tat sat* is Its name’. *Brahmaṇastrividhaḥ smṛtaḥ,* ‘this threefold designation of Brahman, *Om Tat Sat,* is well known.’ *Tat* is a technical name. That Reality which lies behind this changing universe is represented by *Tat,* because It is not immediately present before our eyes.

Therefore, we call It *Tat.* For what is before our eyes, we use the Sanskrit word *idam*—this manifested universe, which we can point out with our finger because it is an object. An object can be known. An object can be pointed out. But that Reality (*Tat*) is not visible to the sensory system. It is beyond *idam;* so, we call It *Tat,* 'That' supreme Reality; the word *adaḥ* is also used. *Adaḥ* means 'there', 'that one', that is beyond the sensory verification. That is called *adaḥ.* So, there are two terms, *idam* and *adaḥ*; *adaḥ* is also called *Tat. Om* is used for all purposes—the supreme symbol of the ultimate Reality dealing with the world seen by the senses and the world beyond the sensory level. Both are included in the word *Om.* Both the manifest world and the other which transcends this manifestation, are included in this word *Om.*

The whole *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* expounds this word *Om,* and correlates it with our three states of consciousness—waking, dream and sleep. This is a wonderful study undertaken in the *Praśna Upaniṣad,* the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and other Upaniṣads also. You will find there the exposition of this *Praṇava,* the supreme word *Om.* That is the holiest word in the scriptures. The Buddhist, the Jain and the Hindu very much respect this symbol of the Divine. This symbol *Om* has gone beyond India!

Om Tat Sat is the name of the Divine. It is impersonal, but It can also be Personal. That we have seen in the *Puruṣottama,* the supremely divine Person discussed in the fifteenth chapter. So, Brahman is the unity of both *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa*; all that is included in *Om Tat Sat*. It is a very important *mantra* in Vedic tradition. *Brahmaṇastrividhaḥ smṛtaḥ,* 'it is well known that Brahman has this threefold description' *Om Tat Sat*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* says: *prāṇāḥ vai satyam*, 'world energies are truth'; and Brahman or Atman is *satyasya satyam*, 'the Truth of truth'.

Brāhmaṇāḥ tena vedāśca yajñāśca vihitāḥ purā, 'By That was instituted the *brāhmaṇas* or holy people, the Vedas and the *yajñas* long ago.' In all of them you will find this *Om Tat Sat.* Now, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is taking up each word separately.

तस्मादोमित्युदाहृत्य यज्ञदानतपःक्रियाः।
प्रवर्तन्ते विधानोक्ताः सततं ब्रह्मवादिनाम्॥२४॥

Tasmāt om ityudāhṛtya yajña dāna tapaḥ kriyāḥ;
Pravartante vidhānoktāḥ satatam brahmavādinām— 17. 24

'Therefore, uttering "*Om*", are the acts of sacrifice, gift, and austerity, as enjoined in the ordinances, always begun by the followers of the Vedas.'

First utter *Om,* and then begin a sacrifice, a gift or an austerity. That is an ordinance. We see it all over India as a common feature. The first utterance is *Om*. Then other *mantras* follow. Every *mantra* has *Om* in the beginning. Those who have the knowledge of Vedas and other scriptures, they always place emphasis on *Om.*

In the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* there is a discussion in a whole paragraph about this *Om.* Sometimes, when we ask, 'Shall I do this work?', the reply given is '*Om*'. *Om* means 'permission'. No other word is necessary. That is what you find in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad.* In various ways *Om* was used, and ultimately it became the greatest symbol of the Infinite Divine Reality, Brahman, both transcendental and immanent. This is how we studied the subject of *Om* (ॐ) in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad.* अ, उ, म (*A, U, M*) is *Aum* or *Om;* but there is also an *amātra*, an unuttered sound. That is the *chandrakalā* or crescent moon, and, the *bindu* or dot (ँ) that is put on *Om.* These three अ, उ, म represent the three states of waking, dream and sleep. The other (ँ) represents the *turīya* or transcendental state. These four are described in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad.* This is our true nature: the Atman manifesting in the waking state, the Atman manifesting in the dream state, the Atman absolutely present but unmanifested in the sleep state, and, beyond these three states, is the absolute transcendental experience which is called *turīya.* This is how the four sections of *Om* and the four sections of experience are correlated one to one. So, 'the whole universe is *Om*'. The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* begins by saying, *Om iti etat akṣaram idam sarvam*, 'this universe is nothing but *Om*'. What a tremendous generalisation it is! How subtle the mind must have become to make such generalisations! The whole universe is *Om* in its two aspects: manifested and unmanifested.

तदित्यनभिसन्धाय फलं यज्ञतपःक्रियाः।
दानक्रियाश्च विविधाः क्रियन्ते मोक्षकांक्षिभिः॥२५॥

Tat iti anabhisandhāya phalam yajña tapaḥ kriyāḥ;
Dāna kriyāśca vividhā kriyante mokṣa kāmkṣibhiḥ— 17. 25

'Uttering "*Tat*", and without aiming at fruits, are the various acts of *yajña* or sacrifice, austerity, and gift performed by the seekers of *mokṣa.*'

Uttering *Tat*, and without aiming at any fruits, any benefits for oneself, are the various acts of *yajña* or sacrifice, *tapas* or austerity, and *dāna* or gifts, performed by seekers of *mokṣa* or liberation. *Tat* signifies that emphasis on the ultimate Reality in all our activities—activities like the giving of gifts etc.; in all these, *Tat* is uttered because that supreme Reality is emphasized through all these things. That is the greatness of this little word *Tat.*

सद्भावे साधुभावे च सदित्येतत्प्रयुज्यते।
प्रशस्ते कर्मणि तथा सच्छब्दः पार्थ युज्यते॥२६॥

Sadbhāve sādhubhāve ca sat iti etat prayujyate;
Praśaste karmaṇi tathā sacchabdaḥ pārthayujyate — 17. 26

'The word "*Sat*" is used in the sense of reality and of goodness; and so also, O Pārtha, the word "*Sat*" is used in the sense of an auspicious act.'

Then comes the last, i.e. *Sat* in *Om Tat Sat. Sat* is used in these various senses: *sadbhāve,* 'in the sense of reality'; and *sādhubhāve,* 'in the sense of goodness'. We use the expressions like *sat puruṣa*, which means 'good person', *sat karma,* 'good action', and *sat vicāra,* 'good mental activity' etc. Here the sense is of goodness. *Sādhubhāva* is the sense of goodness or auspiciousness. *Sat iti etat prayujyate,* '*Sat* can be used in these senses', i.e. *sat bhāva*, and *sādhu bhāva.* Then, *praśaste karmaṇi tathā,* 'wherever there is a highly praiseworthy act being done'; *sacchabdaḥ pārtha yujyate,* 'there also we can use the word *sat*.' *Praśaste karmaṇi* means 'in a highly praiseworthy act', the word *Sat* is applied. In all these situations, the word *sat* is used to expound the nature of the work that is being done: *sadbhāva, sādhubhāva,* and *praśaste karmaṇi.* These things are mentioned here and that is all *sat.*

यज्ञे तपसि दाने च स्थितिः सदिति चोच्यते।
कर्म चैव तदर्थीयं सदित्येवाभिधीयते॥२७॥

Yajñe tapasi dāne ca sthitiḥ sat iti cocyate;
Karma caiva tad arthīyam sat iti eva abhidhīyate— 17. 27

'Steadiness in *yajña,* austerity, and gift is also called "*Sat*"; action in connection with these (or, action for the sake of the Lord) is also called "*Sat*".'

The stability of mind when one performs *yajña, dāna* and *tapas,* is also called *sat.* That stability of the mind, as opposed to a shaky or vacillating mind, is *sat.* When you do *yajña* or sacrifice*, tapas* or austerity*,* and *dāna* or charity*,* if your mind is firm and steady, that also is described as *sat. Karma caiva tad arthīyam,* 'whatever actions you do with relation to the Divine, with relation to that *Tat*'*; sat iti eva abhidhīyate,* 'that is also called *Sat*'. *Tad arthīyam* means 'in order to achieve that great Truth or *Tat*'. In actions of that kind, we can use *sat* for that attitude of mind. That is how these three words *Om, Tat,* and *Sat* are given separate definitions. Totality or *Om* is the name of the Divine.

When Sri Ramakrishna went into *samādhi* after his *guru* Totapuri had instructed him in the great Vedantic teachings with a view to lifting the mind beyond this world of duality and merging it in the infinite, then the mind itself was dead and only the Atman remained. When Sri Ramakrishna remained in that state for three days and nights, his *guru* wanted to bring him down to the normal state. Among the *mantras* he recited loudly at that time in that room in Dakshineswar temple was *Om Tat Sat, Om Tat Sat.* This was the *mantra* which could bring Sri Ramakrishna's mind down to the normal plane. Similarly, other *mantras* are also there to send the mind up to a high plane and also to bring it down. By some method, this kind of achievement is there in the science of spiritual development. All *karma* or action devoted to that *Tat,* is also known as *Sat.*

अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतं च यत्।
असदित्युच्यते पार्थ न च तत्प्रेत्य नो इह॥२८॥

Aśraddhayā hutam dattam tapastaptam kṛtam ca yat;
Asat iti ucyate pārtha na ca tat pretya no iha — 17. 28

'Whatever is sacrificed, given, or performed and whatever austerity is practised without *śraddhā,* is called *asat,* O Pārtha; it is naught here or hereafter.'

This is the last verse of the seventeenth chapter. Śrī Kṛṣṇa talked of *Sat* in the previous verse. The opposite word of *Sat* is *asat. Asat* is a very meaningful word in Sanskrit. In Malayālam language of Kerala, a person is said to be *asat,* if he or she is a bad or wicked person.

Whatever 'sacrifice is made', *hutam;* or 'gift is given', *dattam;* or 'austerity is practised', *tapas taptam; aśraddhayā,* 'without *śraddhā*'. When a sacrifice is made without *śraddhā,* or a gift is given to a person without *śraddhā,* or an austerity is practised without *śraddhā; asat iti ucyate pārtha,* 'O Arjuna all that is called *asat.*' What a wonderful situation is *asat* as the opposite of *Sat*! Such a person cannot achieve anything great either 'in this life', *no iha*; 'or in a future existence', *na ca tat pretya.* That person has absolutely lost his or her way. Because it is an *asat* way of doing things, that *Sat* has been taken away. If Truth is taken away from life, it becomes an absolutely meaningless existence. That is the great lesson we have to learn.

What did Sri Ramakrishna say? A zero has no value; you put ten zeroes, it has no value; it doesn't add to anything. But, put a '1' before the zeroes, then everything shines. Every new zero then contributes plenty to the value. Similarly, when this *Tat Sat* is put in front, then whatever you do becomes really fine, meaningful, and rich in every sense of the term. So, put the '1' first, and then any number of zeroes; that is what life should be. Sri Ramakrishna said, put God first and then everything else. Then they all become meaningful. Take away God and everything becomes meaningless.

Śaṅkarācārya said in his commentary on the Upaniṣads: *tadātmanā vinirmuktaḥ jagat asat sampadyate,* 'when you negate the Atman from the whole manifested universe, the universe becomes *asat.*' It becomes a non-entity. Take the '1' away, and the zeroes become absolutely meaningless. Put back the '1' and everything is fine. That is why the first verse of *Æśā Upaniṣad* is: *Æśā vāsyam idam sarvam,* 'the whole universe is to be

covered by that one reality called *Æśa, Æśvara,* or divine.' That is what makes for the reality of this world. So, have the consciousness of the One behind the many. Then the many become meaningful. What did the British poet Shelley sing? 'The One remains, the many change and pass'. Take the One away, and the many become so many zeroes. Vedanta therefore stresses that men and women should go to the One behind the many; through the many, they go to the One, and discover the many in a new light. The many then becomes full of beauty, full of charm, we have nothing here to reject then, because the One is there. That realization is what makes for real joy in life, zest in life. Vedanta wants people to have zest in life. It does not want people to treat life as something empty. How can one have zest in emptiness? There is a big reality behind this manifold universe and that must be emphasized again and again.

This seventeenth chapter shows that the three wonderful forces—*sattva, rajas,* and *tamas,* operate every second in our lives and in nature. These three forces are always there: attraction, repulsion, and balance. In human life they find tremendous expression. If the mind is *tāmasik,* a particular type of behaviour results. If the mind is *rājasik,* another behaviour takes place. If the mind is *sāttvik,* a wonderful behaviour is seen. This is something that we can study in ourselves as well as in others, and, through that study, we can lift the mind from a lower state to a higher state.

As I often say, our politics in India today is full of *rajas* and *tamas.* That is why there is so much of character assassination, violence, abuse and such other things. During elections we can expect some trouble. But on normal days, there should not be this kind of dirty political dealings. If a little *sattva* comes into the minds of the people who handle politics, you will find a new type of politics, an honourable politics. You can see, therefore, the application of this theory of the three *guṇas* in human life. If parents are *rājasik* or *tāmasik,* you see one type of behaviour; with a little *sattva,* you will find another wonderful type of behaviour. *Rajas* gives one energy; without *rajas,* there is no energy. But that energy must be positive, must be for the good of all; that can come only when *rajas* is controlled by a little of *sattva. Sattva*-controlled energy of *rajas* is what makes for a constructive, creative life in society. Nobody has only *rajas*, only *sattva,* or only *tamas.* All of us have all the three *guṇas,* but proportions vary. In some, there will

be an excess of *tamas* and a little of *sattva;* or, an excess of *rajas* and a little *sattva;* or, an excess of *sattva* and a little of *rajas* and *tamas*. So, it is a question of adjusting. We have to build up our minds on the line of *sattva*. Then *rajas* and *tamas* will be our servants; they will be useful to us. Even *tamas* has a role to play. Psychology tells us, as I have said before, that even anger has a place in human life. Pain also has a place in human life. So, if you have pain in the body, ask a physiologist the purpose of pain. He or she will say, 'Pain makes you survive'. Without pain one cannot survive at all. Suppose you touch fire and you don't feel any pain, then you will be in touch with fire till it consumes the whole of your hand. You will not be withdrawing your hand. Pain is essential; it has a positive value. So also, suffering in life has a value. One can learn great lessons from it.

This kind of educating oneself in the light of the three *guṇas* will help to develop character and a richer personality; there will arise a type of more pleasing men and women, who can attract people and can also live in happy relationship with other people. So, this whole chapter dealt with this subject of the three *guṇas.* The whole universe is a product of the interplay of the three *guṇas* according to Sāṅkhya philosophy. Only at the human level can we study it at close quarters. But, in the world of matter one has to investigate it scientifically to find that these forces are there.

We enter the eighteenth chapter next Sunday, when we meet here.

इति श्रद्धात्रयविभाग योगो नाम सप्तदशोऽध्यायः ।

Iti Śraddhātrayavibhāga yogo nāma saptaḍaśo'dhyāyaḥ —

'Thus ends the seventeenth chapter, designated *The Enquiry into the Threefold Śraddhā.'*

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Chapter 18

Mokṣa-Sannyása-Yoga
The Way of Liberation in Renunciation

Today we enter the eighteenth chapter—the last and quite a long chapter of the *Gītā.* It is considered to be a summing up of all the various ideas that have been expounded in the previous seventeen chapters. The chapter opens with a question from Arjuna. Arjuna's question is *our* question. We all have the same problems. Arjuna had put many questions to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the various chapters, and in this—the chapter of *The Way of Liberation in Renunciation*—Śrī Kṛṣṇa answers them. But somehow or other, Arjuna is persistent in his questioning; these questions persistently arise in our minds also. The question which Arjuna asks once again is: Shall I keep quiet?, or shall I act, shall I work? Is performing some work better?, or is sitting quiet better? Without work one cannot live; and with work, there is trouble. What are we to choose?

Lokamanya Tilak, in his *Gītā Rahasya,* a famous two-volume book, mentions: if you do work, some trouble will come; if you don't do any work, no trouble will come. And the Hindu decided: we shall not do any work at all! But the heart is craving for many things! Lot of hypocrisy came into human life because of that. The heart is craving, but the mind says, I shall not do anything. Therefore, all troubles came.

Karmendriyāṇi samyamya ya āste manasā smaran;
Indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate —

This is the sixth verse in the third chapter of the *Gītā*, the chapter on *Karma Yoga.* That chapter also started with Arjuna's question about work and no-work, about action and inaction. Which of these is to be preferred? Śrī Kṛṣṇa definitely said, action is to be preferred to inaction. But, again and again, this question comes up. In that verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said: 'you discipline into quietness your organs of action; your body is quiet; but your

mind is constantly running out to different things in the world, to different sense objects; such a person is a deluded person, and he or she is a *mithyācāra,* "a hypocrite".' Then, in the next verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said: *yastu indriyāṇi manasā niyamya,* 'those who discipline the sense organs by the mind'; and then, *asaktaḥ*, remaining 'unattached'; *karmendriyaiḥ karmayogam ārabhate,* 'directs the organs of action to the path of yoga of work'; *sa viśiṣyate,* 'that person excels'. He or she is a real *yogī.* These are two types of persons pointed out by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the third chapter. Now, in this chapter, that topic raises its head once again.

अर्जुन उवाच —

Arjuna uvāca—

'Arjuna said:'

संन्यासस्य महाबाहो तत्त्वमिच्छामि वेदितुम्।
त्यागस्य च हृषीकेश पृथक्केशिनिषूदन॥१॥

Sannyāsasya mahābāho tattvam icchāmi veditum;
Tyāgasya ca hṛṣīkeśa pṛthak keśiniṣūdana — 18. 1

'O mighty-armed Hṛṣīkeśa, O slayer of Keśi (Śrī Kṛṣṇa), I desire to know severally, the truth of *sannyāsa,* as also of *tyāga*.'

I desire to know severally, O mighty-armed Kṛṣṇa, the truth of *sannyāsa* and also the truth of *tyāga.* What is the meaning of *sannyāsa*? What is the meaning of *tyāga*? *Sannyāsa* is renouncing the world and becoming a *sādhu* or monk or nun. But *tyāga* also is renunciation, but of what? Is that also like *sannyāsa,* giving up all work and running away to a forest? That question comes up, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is clarifying that point in these early verses of the eighteenth chapter.

Swami Vivekananda has said that the national ideals of India are *tyāga* or renunciation and *seva* or service. *Tyāga* means renunciation; *tyaj* means to give up, to throw away. And *seva* means service. These are the national ideals. That *tyāga* Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to expound here. And *sannyāsa* is a technical term; all are not going to be *sannyāsins,* because it is something very special. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to explain the difference between *tyāga*

and *sannyāsa.* And Śrī Kṛṣṇa is clarifying the type of life we should lead—whether based on *sannyāsa* or *yoga*.

श्रीभगवान् उवाच—

Śrībhagavān uvāca —

'The Blessed Lord said':

काम्यानां कर्मणां न्यासं संन्यासं कवयो विदुः।
सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं प्राहुस्त्यागं विचक्षणाः॥२॥

Kāmyānām karmaṇām nyāsam sannyāsam kavayo viduḥ;
Sarvakarma phalatyāgam prāhustyāgam vicakṣaṇāḥ—18. 2

'The renunciation of *kāmya* actions, the sages understand as *sannyāsa;* the wise declare the abandonment of the fruit of all works as *tyāga*.'

Kavayo viduḥ, 'sages say'; that *nyāsam*, 'renunciation'; of all *kāmyānām karmaṇām,* 'desire-prompted actions', either for worldly benefit or for heavenly benefit; is *sannyāsam*, '*sannyāsa*'. *Nyāsa* means 'giving up'; *sam nyāsa* means 'completely giving up'. *Vicakṣaṇāḥ,* 'wise people'; *prāhuḥ,* 'say'; *sarvakarma phalatyāgam*, 'giving up the *fruit* of all works'; is *tyāgam*, '*tyāga*'. You don't give up action. You 'give up only the fruit of all actions'—*sarva karma phala tyāga*, and continue to work. That is called *tyāga.* This can be done by *bhakti,* by dedicating the fruits of action to the Divine, or through *jñāna*—the mind taken away from the fruits of actions through *jñāna*. Attachment to the fruits is actually attachment to the separate ego that you and I are. When I am attached to this separate ego, then I am attached to the fruits of actions.

In the *Gītā* we find reference to *sarva-bhūta-hite-ratāḥ* and *loka-samgraha* ideas—'I work for the good of the world, good of society, good of all people'. There the ego as a separate entity vanishes. It feels its oneness with the world outside. Even the father or mother feels his or her oneness with the children around. That is why he or she works. Why not extend it beyond the genetic limitations? The *Gītā* wants us to do that. When you live in a society, you must take society into account. And today's society is not only national, but also international.

Originally, in the history of our *Sanātana Dharma,* we had plenty of sacrifices in the Vedic period. Many people performed sacrifices with a desire to go to heaven. That *kāma-vāsanā* or tendency of desire was there: 'I must get this. I must get that'. So, after some time some people felt that it was nonsense doing all sorts of rituals to go to heaven. They did not care for rituals. They left their houses; for if they stayed in the house, they had to do these rituals. They did not want to do those rituals and so they left society. They became *sannyasins.* They went to the forest, lived there, and they had not to perform any sacrifices. They merely contemplated and realized the truth that is within. In this way, there came into existence a new type of spiritual life compared to the earlier one which was conservative, based on rituals and ceremonies. On the one side is actions and rituals—various duties and ceremonies—done with the desire for going to heaven and enjoying the pleasures of heaven. Heaven is said to be full of pleasures. As it is said, here on earth we have to perspire to earn our living. In heaven you will get whatever you want without any 'perspiration'. With this kind of attitude people built up an idea of heaven. Then, on the other side were people who said, 'We don't want heaven. We do not want this desire-prompted action. We shall remain actionless.' When one retires to the forest, one no longer performs these ceremonies and rituals. One does not even have in a forest the items necessary for performing elaborate rituals. So, these people developed contemplation as the main theme. And the people in the household continued to do desire-prompted actions. They lead a worldly life, what is called in Sanskrit, a *Gṛhastha* life. That is how this division came. Later on, Śrī Kṛṣṇa came. And He said that one could have the spirit of *sannyāsa* in one's life by means of *tyāga*, 'renunciation of the fruit of actions'; then one is as good as a *sannyāsin.* When one renounces the fruit of actions, lives a good life, and serves the community, it is beautiful. That is what the *Gītā* has given as a solution to this problem. Here is the world, and here is the one who is essentially worldly, who is centred in one's own pleasure *in this world and in the next world as well.* And here is the other who renounces all these and becomes an ascetic, curses this worldly life, and goes to the forest. The forest recluse curses worldly person; the worldly person also curses the forest recluse. We had both in our history.

Śaṅkarācārya went for a discussion with Maṇḍana Miśra, who was a great ritualist and philosopher of that time. Śaṅkarācārya had completely shaven his head. And this great Maṇḍana Miśra asked, 'Why this shaven head?' In Sanskrit this is put very beautifully: *Kuto muṇḍī?,* 'wherefrom this shaven head?' Quick came the reply, 'from the neck upwards!' Neck upwards is the shaven head. A shaven monk is not welcome in a family where there is *śrāddha* or ceremony for the dead going on. It is said to be inauspicious for the *śrāddha*. That was the conception at that time. So, you can see this controversy between doing work for personal enjoyment with a mind full of desires, and getting rid of this nonsense and living a life of contemplation—a life of a *parivrājaka*—in the forest. And going to a forest was easy in those days. Leave the house, walk half a kilometre, and you will be in a forest! A forest life was not difficult. Now, you have to travel a thousand miles and even then you may not get a deep forest. This development which took place in India gave rise to this problem: to work or to renounce. And this problem has been solved by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā.* That is the beauty of this great book. Here itself one can get this wonderful quality of *sannyāsa;* you do not have to renounce the world and go to a forest to be a true *sannyāsi*. Here in the world itself one can be a *sannyāsi* by living a life of inward spiritual striving and outward human service, characterized by the absence of attachment to the work that one does. Here itself one can achieve the highest.

In many passages of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* these ideas have been discussed through various discourses and discussions. We get one such *śloka* in the second part of the *Hitopadeśa* (*Sandhi*, 90):

Vane'pi doṣāḥ prabhavanti rāgiṇām
gṛheṣu sarvendriya nigrahaḥ tapaḥ;
Akutsite karmaṇi yaḥ pravartate
nivṛtta rāgasya gṛham tapovanam —

You want to leave this home and society, and go to a *tapovanam*, 'a forest for *tapas*', to achieve your spiritual development! No, you can convert your home itself into a *tapovanam*. How? *Vane'pi doṣāḥ prabhavanti rāgiṇām*, 'those who have sensory attachments in the mind, even if they leave the home and go to a forest, they will have great trouble

there'. That is so because the mind also is going with them. They have left behind only the worldly life at the body level. But the mind is full of *rāga* or attachments; therefore, he or she cannot get the fruit of that renunciation. *Gṛheṣu sarvendriya nigrahaḥ tapaḥ,* 'to live in a household with one's sensory system well disciplined, is real *tapas.*' Therefore, *akutsite karmaṇi yaḥ pravartate,* 'those who are engaged in blameless deeds in society'; *nivṛtta rāgasya,* 'and one whose attachment has been conquered'; *gṛham tapovanam,* 'his or her home becomes a *tapovanam* or forest retreat.'

This is the final teaching that has come out of all these discussions by great minds. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa takes up all this and gives us this remarkable advice: We can have realization here and now. We need not seek for it in a far away forest or anywhere in a heaven. Because the truth that we are seeking is already within us. Where should we run to for getting it. It is 'here' only, *iha, iha, iha.* One person said: 'I want to be a scientist. I want to have a scientific mind. I will go here and there to get my scientific mind.' What does that person mean by saying that he or she has to go here and there to get a scientific mind? Even here we can make our mind scientific. Search for the truth, discipline the mind, and we can have it here. Why go here and there? It is like saying, 'I will go there to breathe oxygen'. Why? Wherever we are, there is oxygen. We have to just breathe it. That is all. Similarly, it does not make sense to say, 'I will be spiritual there'. Why not here? That truth first came prominently from the Upaniṣads through the *Gītā*. 'Here, here' and not 'there, there'. And, in this modern age Sri Ramakrishna puts it as these two words in his sayings: 'here' and 'there'; He says, '"Here, here," is *jñāna;* "there, there," is *ajñāna.*' Just see the language. Truth is somewhere 'there'; that is *ajñāna* or ignorance. Truth is 'here' itself; that is *jñāna* or knowledge. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving that *jñāna* in this concluding eighteenth chapter.

You can work either with selfishness or work with altruistic intentions. A man like the late Sorokin of the Harvard University speaks for the need of a little altruistic impulse in modern civilization. That is not there. Therefore, people are suffering. Bertrand Russell also refers to the need for a little love in the heart for others. Then you can solve human problems in the modern age. These two thinkers—Sorokin and Russell—and many others, have referred to the human capacity to go beyond the ego limitation.

Deal with the world from that wider point of view. That is the central theme of the whole *Gītā.* The whole *yoga* of the *Gītā* is that wonderful attitude of oneness with all. And whatever fruits come from the works I do, that will go for the good of all, and not *only* for my own petty little self. So, these two definitions are given in these verses: renunciation of *kāmya karma* and *sarva-karma-phala-tyāga.* Then,

त्याज्यं दोषवदित्येके कर्म प्राहुर्मनीषिण:।
यज्ञदानतप:कर्म न त्याज्यमिति चापरे॥३॥

Tyājyam doṣavadityeke karma prāhurmanīṣiṇaḥ;
Yajña dāna tapaḥ karma na tyājyam iti cāpare— 18. 3

'Some philosophers declare that all actions should be relinquished as evil, whilst others (say) that the work of *yajña, dāna* and *tapas* should not be relinquished.'

Eke prāhuḥ manīṣiṇaḥ, 'some wise people say'; *tyājyam doṣavat iti karma,* 'that all *karmas* should be renounced as a source of evil.' *Tyājyam* means 'what is meant to be renounced' or to be given up; *doṣavat,* 'because it is connected with evil'; *iti eke manīṣiṇaḥ prāhuḥ,* 'some group of wise persons say like this': '*Karma* is a source of evil; it is better we give it up'. That is one view. But there is another view also. *Yajña dāna tapaḥ karma na tyājyam iti ca apare,* 'other wise people say: *yajña* or sacrifice, *dāna* or charity, and *tapas* or austerity—these three actions should not be given up by anybody.' *Yajña* is sacrifice in its spiritual sense or in its ritualistic sense; *dāna* is charity, helping others; *tapaḥ* is austerity, self-control—these three should not be given up by anybody. So say other wise people.

निश्चयं शृणु मे तत्र त्यागे भरतसत्तम।
त्यागो हि पुरुषव्याघ्र त्रिविध: सम्प्रकीर्तित:॥४॥

Niścayam śṛṇu me tatra tyāge bharatasattama;
Tyāgo hi puruṣavyāghra trividhaḥ samprakīrtitaḥ— 18. 4

'Hear from Me the final truth about *tyāga* or renunciation, O best of the Bhāratas. For renunciation has been declared to be of three kinds, O tiger among men.'

Bharatasattama, 'O best of the Bhāratas' i.e. Arjuna; I convey to you My decisive conclusion on this subject. *Niṣcayam* means 'conclusion'; well determined conclusion. What is that conclusion?, *tyāgo hi puruṣavyāghra trividhaḥ samprakīrtitaḥ.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa will give His conclusion a little later, but here He is giving a brief description of *tyāga:* '*tyāga* or giving up of action, O tiger among human beings, belongs to three categories; this is well known'. As discussed in the seventeenth chapter, *sattva, rajas,* and *tamas* come into the picture in *tyāga* also. In our day-to-day life we will at some time or the other find whatever is said here.

यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत्।
यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम्॥५॥

Yajña dāna tapaḥ karma na tyājyam kāryameva tat;
Yajño dānam tapaścaiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām — 18. 5

'The work of *yajña, dāna*, and *tapas* should not be relinquished, but it should indeed be performed; (for) *yajña, dāna* and *tapas* are purifying agents according to the wise.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that *yajña* or sacrifice*, dāna* or charity, and *tapas* or austerity and self-control—these should not be given up by anybody. They are 'indeed to be done', *kāryam eva.* Why? *Yajño dānam tapaścaiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām,* 'these three—*yajña, dāna* and *tapas*—purify the mind of a human being.' We have to do them. We have to evolve. They are the means to make our minds purer and purer. *Pāvanāni,* 'are purfying', holy; making the mind fit for spiritual development. *Manīṣiṇām,* 'for the wise people'; the wise people will never give up these. They understand the value of these in purifying the mind.

It is a beautiful idea; you feel your oneness with others, beyond your own genetic limitation. That is how this ego becomes purified. The mind becomes purified by that expansion; that little narrow attitude goes away. But, even these three—*yajña, dāna, tapas*—must be done in the correct spirit or attitude. What is that? The next *śloka* says:

एतान्यपि तु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलानि च।
कर्तव्यानीति मे पार्थ निश्चितं मतमुत्तमम्॥६॥

Etānyapi tu karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā phalāni ca;
Kartavyānīti me pārtha niścitam matam uttamam — 18. 6

'But even these works, O Pārtha, should be performed renouncing attachment and the fruits; such is My best and certain conviction.'

Iti me niścitam matam uttamam, 'this is My firm and best conclusion'. What is that? *Etānyapi tu karmāṇi,* 'even these actions', namely, *yajña, dāna,* and *tapas; kartavyāni,* 'they are to be done', we are duty-bound to do them. How to do them?, *sangam tyaktvā phalāni ca,* 'renouncing all attachment and all fruits'. This is My firm and determined conclusion on the subject. Even when we do these actions, it should be done without attachment, giving up that littleness of mind which seeks the fruits of actions for oneself. That idea of *lokasamgraha,* 'working for the good of the whole world', must be constantly behind the mind. Then only humanity can progress to the highest level. Any kind of limitation by this little ego and the genetic system will make for conflict, violence, and all sorts of sufferings in society. So, men and women must grow beyond this genetic limitation which nature has given to us. Our own higher nature can overcome this limitation. So, *assert human nature over physical nature. This is the importance of all spiritual life.* Physical life is natural life. Animals have it; we also live it. But at certain stages, we must assert our own true nature. We are not a speck of dust; we are not under the control of nature's forces. We have our own nature with its own energies hidden within. When we begin to assert them, this development will take place in every human being. Moral, ethical, and spiritual growth involves all these things. Why should I grow spiritually?, because that is my true nature. No animal can grow; no external nature can grow. The human being alone can grow spiritually. And so we grow in that direction, slowly and steadily. And the first step is the sense of detachment, absence of attachment to the fruits of actions. The *Gītā* started the second chapter with the same theme. And we are now seeing the other aspects of the same theme.

नियतस्य तु संन्यास: कर्मणो नोपपद्यते।
मोहात्तस्य परित्यागस्तामस: परिकीर्तित:॥७॥

Niyatasya tu sannyāsaḥ karmaṇo nopapadyate;
Mohāt tasya parityāgaḥ tāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ — 18. 7

'But the renunciation of actions of the obligatory nature is not proper. Abandonment of the same from delusion is declared to be *tāmasika.*'

Niyatasya karmaṇo tu, 'of actions which are prescribed to be done' by a human being; *sannyāsaḥ na upapadyate,* 'it is not proper to renounce'. *Niyata* means 'prescribed'—just as the state prescribes certain things for the citizens which they have to do for the good of all. Such laws are meant for the good of all. One has to observe them, practise them. Similarly, spiritual teachings are for the good of our spiritual health. We have to follow those teachings just as we would follow certain medical advice that comes to us from a doctor. *Na upapadyate,* 'it is not proper' to give up *niyata karmas,* 'prescribed duties'. *Mohāt tasya parityāgaḥ,* 'renouncing them out of mere delusion'; *tāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ,* that kind of *tyāga* 'is said to be *tāmasik tyāga*', renunciation born out of *tamas.* So, when there is the predominance of *tamas* in us, we will give up even actions which are prescribed for our own good and for the good of all. That kind of giving up or *tyāga* is called *tāmasik* renunciation.

Similarly, the next verse deals with *rājasik tyāga.*

दु:खमित्येव यत्कर्म कायक्लेशभयात्त्यजेत्।
स कृत्वा राजसं त्यागं नैव त्यागफलं लभेत्॥८॥

Duḥkham ityeva yatkarma kāyakleśa bhayāt tyajet;
Sa kṛtvā rājasam tyāgam naiva tyāgaphalam labhet — 18. 8

'One who from fear of bodily trouble relinquishes action, because it is painful, thus performing a *rājasik* relinquishment, does not obtain the fruit thereof.'

Duḥkham ityeva yat karma, 'this work is very troublesome'; so, I shall give it up. With that attitude of fear when you give up actions, that giving

up is of the *rājasik* type. *Duḥkham,* 'actions which are troublesome physically'; further, *kāyakleśa,* out of fear that actions may be 'physically painful'; *tyajet,* if actions 'are renounced' for these reasons; such renunciation is a *rājasik* renunciation. *Kṛtvā rājasam tyāgam,* 'doing that kind of *rājasik tyāga*'; *sa naiva tyāgaphalam labhet,* 'he or she never achieves the fruit of that renunciation'.

Then comes the *sāttvik tyāga.*

कार्यमित्येव यत्कर्म नियतं क्रियतेऽर्जुन।
सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलं चैव स त्याग: सात्त्विको मत:॥९॥

Kāryam ityeva yatkarma niyatam kriyate'rjuna;
Saṅgam tyaktvā phalam caiva sa tyāgaḥ sāttviko mataḥ—18. 9

'When obligatory work is performed, O Arjuna, only because it ought to be done, leaving attachment and fruit, such *tyāga* or renunciation is regarded as *sāttvika.*'

Sa tyāgaḥ sāttviko mataḥ, 'that renunciation is known as *sāttvika*'; what type of renunciation? *Kāryam ityeva yat karma kriyate,* 'this work is to be done; it is my duty to do it; so, I do it.' *Kāryam* in Sanskrit means, 'what is to be done'—the understanding that a certain action ought to be done. Whatever action is of that type is, *kāryam,* 'I am duty-bound to do it'. And, *Niyatam,* means 'actions which are prescribed.' But these actions are done 'giving up attachment to it and to the fruit of action', *saṅgam tyaktvā phalam caiva*. That kind of *tyāga* is *sāttvik tyāga.* Actions which are prescribed or *niyatam*, and actions which ought to be done or *kāryam,* these kinds of actions if performed, *saṅgam tyaktvā,* 'giving up attachment', *phalam caiva,* 'and giving up the fruits also', *sa tyāgaḥ,* 'that kind of renunciation', is *sāttvik tyāga.* It is the best kind of renunciation.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa had told that *tyāga* or renunciation also belongs to three categories: *sāttvik, rājasik* and *tāmasik.* Now, He says:

न द्वेष्ट्यकुशलं कर्म कुशले नानुषज्जते।
त्यागी सत्त्वसमाविष्टो मेधावी छिन्नसंशय:॥१०॥

Na dveṣṭyakuśalam karma kuśale nānuṣajjate;
Tyāgī sattvasamāviṣṭo medhāvī chinnasamśayaḥ — 18. 10

'The renouncer endued with *sattva*, who is wise, and with one's doubts dispelled, hates not a disagreeable work nor is attached to an agreeable one.'

That worker is *medhāvī* or 'intelligent'; and *chinna samśayaḥ* 'freed from all doubts'. What type of worker?, *na dveṣṭi akuśalam karma,* 'one who does not get upset over an unpropitious action'; and *kuśale na anuṣajjate,* 'one who does not get attached to propitious actions either'. He or she is not frightened by unpropitious actions nor is attached to the propitious actions. *Tyāgī,* he is 'one endowed with that type of *tyāga*'; and *sattvasamāviṣṭo,* 'established in *sattva*'. The whole mind of that person is immersed in *sattva.* He or she is *medhāvī*, 'very intelligent'. What kind of intelligence does that person possess? He or she possesses the intelligence called *medhā*. *Medhā* is a great word in Sanskrit, and according to the Yoga philosophy, the best intelligence energy of the system, refined and further refined, becomes ultimately *medhā.* Your psychic energy can be just ordinary energy, but it can be refined and further refined until it becomes *medhā* energy or *medhā śakti.* What is the meaning of *medhāvī?* One who has that *medhā* is a *medhāvī.* Śaṅkarācārya gives a beautiful definition of this *medhāvī: medhayā ātmajñāna lakṣaṇayā,* 'that *medhā* or intelligence which is of the nature of *ātmajñāna* or knowledge of the Self'; *prajñayā samyuktaḥ,* 'endowed with that kind of Wisdom'. This *medhā* is that intelligence which has touched the Atman. Out of that comes Wisdom. One who has that *medhā* is called *medhāvī.* That kind of *medhā śakti* is highly praised in many utterances of the Vedas. You find this prayer there: 'Let me have *medhā.*' *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* also has praised *medhā:* 'Let me have *medhā śakti*'. Not mere intellect, but something luminous, something higher, is *medhā.* That kind of refined energy, where the refinement is the highest, is what makes for *medhā.* Our people knew that this psychic energy which flows in us can be purified, refined, and made better and better. Even cultural improvement can come only from this refinement of psychic energy. One may be a crude ruffian. What has happened to that person?, his or her psychic energy is of the crude type. So, that person behaves in that

way. The same person can become more gentle, more courteous. What a beautiful development it will be then!

So, we have to refine that psychic energy. This refinement carried on to the highest level gives one *medhā śakti.* A touch of the Atman has come to this energy in the human system. This is how we can grow culturally, spiritually. We were at one time a crude type of aboriginal people; we became cultured and civilized by transforming this psychic energy system within. We tried to purify it, refine it. In the beginning, we destroyed each other or even ate each other as cannibals. Out of that we have come to this civilized state. How did it come about?, by this change which took place within each individual. A certain restraint comes on the sensory psychic system; so, the psychic energy becomes purer and purer. That is the nature of all human development. Even when one goes to the school or college for study, he or she must get this development, though we do not emphasize it now. In fact, some become even more crude by education! An uneducated person is not so crude as some of the educated. That is so because education does not touch this wonderful dimension; one's psyche does not become better, purer, nobler. We leave it as it was; only some knowledge has come. In fact, that makes the psyche more dangerous! That is what is happening all over the world in the sphere of education. We read in the newspapers about the football tragedies. Some players are rough and crude people, even though they are educated. They have not tried to improve the quality of their psyche. Extremely rude and crude they are therefore. They have not refined their psyche at all. In political parties you will find youth being forced to become more crude, more violent. That is because psychic transformation is not taking place. Only, knowledge—some titbits—comes; but the quality of life has not improved at all. There is danger if this value-based education doesn't come to humanity. Within the next fifty years we will have many crude people full of violence. People are already afraid that such a situation may come. A crude community will come which is violent as well. So, the question must be: are you a *medhāvī*? Have you refined and transformed your psychic energy? It is your own responsibility. Nobody else can do it for you. But you can take some influence from the outside and achieve your own mental growth.

So, this refining of inner energy is the essence of character development. All human growth and development come from this particular discipline. If this is emphasized, everything else becomes emphasized. When a child is between seven years and ten years of age, it must be told gently that its energy within needs to be refined. One washes one's cloth and makes it clean. Why not do a little of it for your mind also? The mind also needs to be cleaned. But the mind cannot be cleaned by water or soap. You must have *jñāna* to clean it. We saw it in the fourth chapter (verse 38): *Na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitram iha vidyate,* 'there is nothing so purifying as *jñāna* in this world'. So, the mind can be purified only by *jñāna.* The secular, academic knowledge cannot do this. But through some spiritual development that has taken place, there is the refining of the energy within. That is the meaning of *jñāna*. If children develop in this way, they will not only be educated but they will also become cultured. Culture comes only from this inner refinement; otherwise there is no culture at all. We have to stress this more and more, because we get plenty of physical energy—animal energy—when we are young. We eat well, we can play, we can do everything. There is danger of too much energy unless it is made constructive and creative. Otherwise, youth energy can spell disaster for a whole nation. We are seeing this happening slowly in highly materialistic societies all over the world, because that second step, the refining of our psychic energy has not taken effect at all. So, the psychic energy must be refined into *medhā* and then one becomes a *medhāvī.*

Chinnasamśayaḥ, 'having no more doubts'; at this stage there will be no doubt at all. That is the type of spiritual development mentioned in this verse.

न हि देहभृता शक्यं त्यक्तुं कर्माण्यशेषतः।
यस्तु कर्मफलत्यागी स त्यागीत्यभिधीयते॥११॥

Na hi dehabhṛtā śakyam tyaktum karmāṇyaśeṣataḥ;
Yastu karma phala tyāgī sa tyāgī ityabhidhīyate — 18. 11

'Actions cannot be entirely relinquished by an embodied being, but one who relinquishes the fruits of actions is called a *tyāgi* or renouncer.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is making a general statement; He is giving a universal proposition here in this verse. *Na hi dehabhṛtā śakyam tyaktum karmāṇi aśeṣataḥ,* 'the embodied one i.e. the human being cannot relinquish actions entirely.' We have a body; we live in a body. As long as we are in this body, and as long as we have this body consciousness, we cannot give up action. *Dehabhṛtā,* 'those who have a body'; *karmāṇi tyaktum na śakyam,* 'cannot renounce actions'; *aśeṣataḥ,* 'entirely'. Actions as a whole, no one can abandon or give up. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa adds in the second line: *Yastu karma phala tyāgī sa tyāgī ityabhidhīyate,* 'that person is a *tyāgī* who renounces only the fruit of *karma* or actions', not *karma* itself. *Karma* itself can never be given up; some *karma* will stick to us because we have the body. So, give up the fruit of *karma.* Such a person is called a *tyāgī,* truly speaking.

अनिष्टमिष्टं मिश्रं च त्रिविधं कर्मणः फलम्।
भवत्यत्यागिनां प्रेत्य न तु संन्यासिनां क्वचित्॥१२॥

Aniṣṭamiṣṭam miśram ca trividham karmaṇaḥ phalam;
Bhavati atyāginām pretya na tu sannyāsinām kvacit—18. 12

'The threefold fruits of action—disagreeable, agreeable, and mixed—accrues to non-renouncers after death, but never to the renouncers.'

A wonderful analysis is presented here by Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He says, *trividhaḥ karmaṇaḥ phalam*, '*karmaphala* belongs to three categories'; *aniṣṭam iṣṭam miśram ca*, '*aniṣṭam,* "undesirable", *iṣṭam,* "desirable", and *miśram,* "mixed up"'. These three types of results of actions are there. The fruit of karma may be any one of these three—*iṣṭam, aniṣṭam,* or *miśram.* For whom? *Bhavati atyāginām,* 'for those who have not understood this idea of renunciation', the idea that the fruits of actions are to be renounced. Those who have not understood that truth, to them these three types of fruits of actions will come again and again—some fruits of actions are *iṣṭam,* some are *aniṣṭam,* and some are *miśram.* But, *na tu sannyāsinām kvacit,* 'those who have renounced the fruits of actions, they will never get these three types of experience of action'. This is the difference between a wise person and an unwise person.

Now comes a very remarkable statement by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in verse 13.

पञ्चैतानि महाबाहो कारणानि निबोध मे।
सांख्ये कृतान्ते प्रोक्तानि सिद्धये सर्वकर्मणाम्॥१३॥

Pañcaitāni mahābāho kāraṇāni nibodha me;
Sāmkhye kṛtānte proktāni siddhaye sarvakarmaṇām—18. 13

'Learn from Me, O mighty-armed, these five causes for the accomplishment of all works as declared in the wisdom which is the end of all action.'

Sāṅkhye, 'in *sāṅkhya'* i.e. in Vedanta, which deals with the spirit of knowledge, performance of action will take one to more and more knowledge. In fact, we had studied earlier (4. 33) that *sarvam karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate,* 'all actions find their consummation, O Arjuna, in knowledge'. All actions find complete fulfilment in *jñāna* eventually. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says here: *Sāṅkhye kṛtānte,* 'in the *sāṅkhya* philosophy i.e. Vedanta, dealing with *kṛtānta* or "end of actions", which means knowledge'; *pañca etāni mahābāho kāraṇāni nibodha me,* 'know from Me these five *kāraṇas* or causes behind every action'. What these causes are will be expounded later. Ádi Śaṅkara says that the word *sāṅkhya* here means that scripture in which the categories to be known are enumerated; it means Vedanta. Such enumeration was also done by the Sāṅkhya philosophers like Kapila and others. They were very astute thinkers. The first psychologist of the whole world is Kapila who gave the famous Sāṅkhya philosophy to humanity. The ancients had studied the external world, no doubt. But, the study of the human being was started by the great scientists called Sāṅkhya philosophers. *Siddhaye sarvakarmaṇām,* 'in order to achieve the goal of all actions'; *pañca etāni kāraṇāni,* you need 'these five causes'. Five causes are there behind every action. What these instruments are gets mention in the next verse.

अधिष्ठानं तथा कर्ता करणं च पृथग्विधम्।
विविधाश्च पृथक्चेष्टा दैवं चैवात्र पञ्चमम्॥१४॥

Adhiṣṭhānam tathā kartā karaṇam ca pṛthagvidham;
Vividhāśca pṛthakceṣṭā daivam caivātra pañcamam —18. 14

‘The body as well as the agent, the various senses, the different functions of a manifold kind, and the presiding divinity, the fifth of these.’

What an amount of analysis is found here! What a profound thinking you find behind this statement! First is *adhiṣṭhānam,* ‘the body’ which is the basis of all actions. If the body is not there, there is no action. One particular instrument of action is this body of the embodied human being. *Tathā kartā,* ‘then also the doer’; not only the body, but also the person who has resolved, ‘I shall do such and such an action’. That *kartā* or doer is the second instrument for action. *Karaṇam ca pṛthagvidham,* ‘so many instruments like the different sense organs’. They are the instruments, *karaṇam. Kāraṇam* means ‘cause’; *karaṇam* means ‘instrument’. *Vividhāśca pṛthak ceṣṭā,* ‘various forms and processes of action’; that is the fourth item. Behind every action, these four items are there. There is also a fifth item. That is a remarkable thing. We call it *daivam*. One may call it destiny or chance. We have done everything, and yet a thing did not go well. Something was missing there, and therefore, we could not achieve it. So, destiny is a subtle something which cannot be specified. That destiny is the fifth item. For us in India, this destiny is only the fruit of our past actions. We have no other destiny. No particular person is manipulating the destiny of people. There is no concept of a devil in Vedanta. In the *Hitopadeśa* (*Mitralābha*, 33)*,* the famous book of morals in the Sanskrit language, there is this lucid definition: *Pūrva janma kṛtam karma, tat daivam iti kathyate*, ‘the actions that were done in the past life, in previous births, they are operating as destiny in the present life’. So, it is our own making. Destiny comes from ourselves; not from others. Putting the blame on destiny as something from outside, especially putting the blame on stars and planets for being responsible for our troubles is not accepted by Vedanta and *Sanātana Dharma.* Our own *karmas* done long ago are waiting for maturity. They influence our endeavours at a particular moment to make for success or for failure. That is our idea. Shakespeare said: ‘The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings.’ We are not free. Then, why complain against any stars in the sky?

So, these are the five instruments of actions: *adhiṣṭhānam, kartā, karaṇam pṛthagvidham, vividhāśca pṛthakceṣṭā* and *daivam*. ‘I want to do something. I am the doer.’ That attitude of a *kartā* is needed for work.

Suppose you are deep in sleep, then you are not a *kartā* at all. You are *adhiṣṭhānam* or body, but not a *kartā. Kartā* you are, when you are awake, when you resolve that you will do something. Many *karaṇams* are there—my *karaṇams* within me, and the external *karaṇams* also are there. These are the instruments of action. Then, *vividhāśca pṛthak ceṣṭā,* making these *karaṇams* work in various ways to produce results. They are called *ceṣṭā* or activity. That is also called process. We have to churn the milk to get butter. That is the *ceṣṭā.* Churning also means that a churning rod and a vessel to keep the buttermilk are needed. So, various instruments are there. Then you are there as the agent of action or *kartā,* and there is the basis for all action, the body or *adhiṣṭhāna.* Finally comes *daivam* which means some destiny. Some unknown force is working. I cannot make it out, but I have to take into account that factor also. The other four instruments may be there, still the result may not come. Therefore, we call it *daivam.* So, in all the various philosophies and religions of the world, we have the concept of destiny. We call it *kismat* in Urdu. But, we interpret it in our philosophy as the fruits of *our own past actions,* deposit of our actions lying deep within, suddenly coming to fruition at a particular time. Therefore, we call it *karmaphalam,* 'fruit of action'. You must understand that behind every action there are these five factors. This verse also appears in the *Mahābhārata. Atra* means 'in this particular situation'. So, do not neglect this item, *daivam*, which is very difficult to define.

शरीरवाङ्मनोभिर्यत्कर्म प्रारभते नरः।
न्याय्यं वा विपरीतं वा पञ्चैते तस्य हेतवः॥१५॥

Śarīravāṅ manobhiryat karma prārabhate naraḥ;
Nyāyyam vā viparītam vā pañcaite tasya hetavaḥ — 18. 15

'Whatever action one performs by one's body, speech and mind—whether right or the reverse—these five are its causes.'

Whatever actions one does by *śarīra, vāk,* or *manas,* 'the body, speech, or the mind', whether it be good or bad, behind all of them are these five factors. Whatever actions you initiate in the world, *nyāyyam vā viparītam vā,* 'just or unjust'; *viparītam* actually means 'the opposite'; *pañcaite tasya*

hetavaḥ, ‘their causes are these five’ mentioned in the previous verse. We have to take into account these five factors.

तत्रैवं सति कर्तारमात्मानं केवलं तु यः।
पश्यत्यकृतबुद्धित्वान्न स पश्यति दुर्मतिः॥१६॥

Tatraivam sati kartāram ātmānam kevalam tu yaḥ;
Paśyati akṛtabuddhitvāt na sa paśyati durmatiḥ — 18. 16

‘Such being the case, one who, through a non-purified understanding, looks upon one’s pure Self as the agent, he or she of perverted mind sees not.’

Then comes the conclusion: Now that all the five factors behind actions have been mentioned, what does it mean to you or to me? When there are really these five factors alone in every action, if you ignorantly think, as Ádi Śaṅkara says, *ātmānam kevalam*, ‘the pure Self’ to be the *kartaram*, ‘the agent’, having identified the Self with these factors, and say that ‘I have done, I have done’, putting the whole claim on oneself, it will indeed be a foolish attitude of mind. Those who think so, are *durmatiḥ*, ‘people with perverted mind’. Their thinking is not correct. Why do they think so?, *akṛtabuddhitvāt,* ‘because their minds are not refined’. *Kṛta* means ‘refined’; *akṛta* means ‘unrefined’. Their minds are not yet refined to understand that the pure Self is not the doer, that the five factors together produce the desired result. *Sumatiḥ* means ‘good mind’, and *durmatiḥ* means ‘bad mind’—these are two words in Sanskrit. *Su* prefix always stands for ‘good’; *duḥ* prefix always stands for ‘evil’ in Sanskrit. That is why nobody has names like Duryodhana. Only once for all it was there! Nobody wanted to repeat it. You can once take such a name out of revolt for tradition. Thus all *su* is good, and all *duḥ* is bad. For example, *sukham* or ‘happiness’ versus *duḥkham* or ‘sorrow’.

So, in this verse Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, do not take the egoistic attitude; one’s Self is never the doer. Then only you will be a *sumatiḥ;* otherwise, you will be a *durmatiḥ.*

यस्य नाहंकृतो भावो बुद्धिर्यस्य न लिप्यते।
हत्वाऽपि स इमाँल्लोकान्न हन्ति न निबध्यते॥१७॥

Yasya nāhamkṛto bhāvo buddhiryasya na lipyate;
Hatvāpi sa imāmllokān na hanti na nibadhyate —18. 17

'One who is free from the notion of egoism, whose intelligence is not affected (by good or evil), though he or she kills these people, he or she kills not, nor is bound (by the action).'

This is a very extraordinary statement, more as a praise for one who has gone beyond the dualities and has experienced spiritual knowledge. *Yasya nāhamkṛto bhāvo,* 'one who is free from the I-consciousness', one who has transcended that stress on the ego; *buddhiryasya na lipyate,* 'whose intellect is not tainted'; that person, *hatvāpi sa imāmllokān,* 'even if he or she were to kill all these persons' around; *na hanti na nibadhyate,* 'he or she will not be killing, nor will be bound'. This is an exaggerated statement to stress that he or she will do harm to anybody. Even if he or she does harm, it won't be any serious harm at all.

If Mahatma Gandhi were to decide, 'I shall destroy the people', that destruction will be more construction than destruction. It cannot be destruction, for his whole system had become so attuned to that idea of oneness with all. So, this is only an exaggeration of that particular state. They are so immersed in moral and humanistic values that whatever they do will only be for the good of all. Nothing wrong will be done by them. But in spite of that, this extreme statement is made: even if they were to destroy all this, they will never be doing anything evil since they have renounced their sense of 'I'. They will become the instruments of some divine purpose for any particular action that they do. So, this is one of the ideas that we get in Vedanta: we go beyond the dualities of good and evil. The highest truth is beyond good and evil. It is not good; good and evil are both limitations. Good is better than evil, but both are limitations. So, Sri Ramakrishna refers to two thorns; one thorn which has pierced into the body, and another thorn which is used to remove this thorn. Then both of them are thrown away. One thorn is called evil and the other is called good; afterwards we throw away both. Good and evil stand in that relation. To remove evil, we need

good. Then we throw away the good also. We are then just our own infinite Self. The word good also cannot apply there.

This idea has been very much misunderstood by many. The Western missionary writers say Hindus have no morals. Now things have changed. Many people understand the transcendental level. We cannot classify them as good or bad by any means. At a lower level we can classify one as good or bad. But, when the 'I do', 'I do' *bhāva* is not there, and when the *buddhi* is ever pure and never tainted, then even if they were to kill the whole world, they do not kill and they do not become bound by the action. This is the statement which implies that they have realized their oneness with all; they will never do such things that will bring harm to anyone. They will always do good for all. A perfect person will not do any evil.

Sri Ramakrishna said, 'a perfect dancer will not take one false step.' The dancer has to take so many steps, but because he or she is perfect, he or she will not take one false step. Similarly, a person of perfection who has realized Brahman will never do anything wrong. He or she will never harm anybody, because he or she is one with all. That is the realization. So, this verse is just a sort of eulogy of that high state. In Vedanta you will find this kind of language here and there. And then comes the commentary on the eulogy: Such a person is not going to destroy anybody. Not only that, they *cannot* destroy anybody. They are one with all. That is the language.

ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं परिज्ञाता त्रिविधा कर्मचोदना।
करणं कर्म कर्तेति त्रिविध: कर्मसंग्रह:॥१८॥

Jñānam jñeyam parijñātā trividhā karmacodanā;
Karaṇam karma karteti trividhaḥ karmasamgrahaḥ—18. 18

'Knowledge, the object of knowledge, and the knower form the threefold cause of action. The instrument, the object, and the agent are the threefold basis of action.'

A very remarkable analysis is given here. *Jñānam* or 'knowledge'; *jñeyam* or 'the truth to be known', whatever is knowable, or the object of knowledge; *parijñātā,* 'the knower'; these are the three aspects of knowledge. Knowledge, the object of knowledge, and the knower of

knowledge—these three together is known in Vedantic language as the *tripuṭi.* In the highest Vedantic realization, these three are dissolved into one. *Karmacodanā* is a very technical term. These three—*jñānam, jñeyam* and *parijñātā*—are the threefold cause of action. *Codanā* means 'the cause of'. *Karaṇam karma karteti,* 'the instrument, the action and the doer of action'; these three are called *karma samgrahaḥ* or 'basis of action'. Instrument, object, and agent are the threefold basis of action.

Now these two, *karmacodanā* and *karmasamgrahaḥ* are technical terms. It actually means that the mental component of *karma* is *karmacodanā* and the physical component of *karma* is *karmasamgrahaḥ.* You have a desire to do something. That desire takes a definite shape. That is the *karmacodanā* stage. Then, you implement that desire; just like a pot made by a potter. The potter takes the clay and the instrument called the wheel, and makes the pot out of it. These three are the *karmasamgrahaḥ* aspects of *karma.* Thus, these are the psychic and physical dimensions of a *karma.* Knowledge, the object of knowledge and the knower—these are the internal state of the human being. Outwardly, it expresses as *karaṇam, karma* and *kartā*, 'the instrument of action, the action and the actor'. These three constitute the *karmasamgrahaḥ*, the external state of action.

Unless an impulse arises in our mind in the form of 'I must do something', nothing happens. And that impulse will develop into these three forms—*jñānam, jñeyam* and *parijñātā.* What is it that I should do, what objects should I handle, all these factors are handled by the mind only. As soon as the mind is ready, it finds expression in action. Behind every action is an impulse of the mind to act. That impulse to act is necessary before one actually acts externally.

Karaṇam means an instrument, just like the wheel of a potter; a spade in your hand is a *karaṇa;* the surgical instruments in the hands of a doctor are also *karaṇas.* These are needed for work in the external world. But internally what is needed is the impulse. The mind thinks: 'I shall do this. I shall do that.' Then only this thought projects outside as action. Most of the internal ideas do not find external expression in the form of action. Only some of them find expression as external action. Many fancies are there in the mind which do not find expression. Those thoughts which have some

more energy of expression, a little more push from the desires of the mind, they alone find expression in the external world in the form of action.

ज्ञानं कर्म च कर्ता च त्रिधैव गुणभेदतः।
प्रोच्यते गुणसंख्याने यथावच्छृणु तान्यपि॥१९॥

Jñānam karma ca kartā ca tridhaiva guṇabhedataḥ;
Procyate guṇasamkhyāne yathāvacchṛṇu tānyapi — 18. 19

'Knowledge, action, and agent are declared in the Sāṅkhya philosophy to be of three kinds only, from the distinction of *guṇas;* hear them also duly.'

These three—*jṇānam, karma* and *kartā*— each of them can be threefold: *sāttvik, rājasik* or *tāmasik.* Take *jñāna:* it can be *sāttvik jñāna, rājasik jñāna,* or *tāmasik jñāna.* Take *karma:* it can be *sāttvik karma, rājasik karma,* or *tāmasik karma.* And *kartā* or the actor; he or she can also be *sāttvik, rājasik,* or *tāmasik.* This division based on the three *guṇas*, has been made by the great Sāṅkhya philosophers—Kapila and others. This distinction is *tridhā eva,* 'of three kinds only'; *guṇabhedataḥ,* 'according to the differences in their *guṇas*'; and *procyate,* 'this has been expounded'; *guṇasamkhyāne,* 'in the great philosophy dealing with the *guṇas*', which means the Sāṅkhyan thought. The earliest philosophers and the depth psychologists of the world were the Sāṅkhyas. They entered into the minds of the human beings and studied it carefully. Kapila is considered to be a very great and deep philosopher. So, we developed psychology very deeply. And when we went into the depth of the human being, we discovered the immortal *Puruṣa,* the Self behind the body-mind complex. In between the body and the Self, they found all these other categories like the sense organs, the *manas*, *buddhi,* etc.

According to the *guṇabheda*, differences in the *guṇas*, we can put each of these—*jñānam, karma,* and *kartā*—into one of the three categories. This is so said in the *samkhyāna* or in the enumeration of the *guṇas* by the Sāṅkhyas. *Yathāvat śṛṇu tānyapi,* 'listen to Me when I expound this particular classification also' of the three items according to the three *guṇas.*

सर्वभूतेषु येनैकं भावमव्ययमीक्षते।
अविभक्तं विभक्तेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि सात्त्विकम्॥२०॥

Sarvabhūteṣu yenaikam bhāvam avyayam īkṣate;
Avibhaktam vibhakteṣu tajjñānam viddhi sāttvikam—18. 20

'That by which the one indestructible reality is seen in all beings, inseparate in the separated, know that knowledge to be *sāttvika.*'

From this verse onward, *jñāna* is explained from the standpoint of three *guṇas—sattva, rajas,* and *tamas.* This verse deals with the *sāttvik jñāna.* What is *sāttvik jñāna*? The verse gives a very remarkable definition. *Sarvabhūteṣu yena ekam bhāvam avyayam īkṣate,* 'that by which one sees in all beings a single indestructible reality manifesting in these diverse forms'; *avibhaktam vibhakteṣu*, 'undivided in things apparently divided'; *tat jñānam viddhiḥ sātvikam*, 'know that to be *sāttvik jñāna*'—that by which one sees that *ekam bhavam*, 'that unity'. Śaṅkarācārya says, *bhāva śabdaḥ vastu vācī,* '*bhāva* word here means the *vastu,* the reality'. In all the diverse things and beings of the world, one who perceives one single reality pulsing in them, he or she has in him or her *sāttvik* knowledge. *Avibhaktam vibhakteṣu,* 'undivided in things apparently divided'; this is a wonderful expression. You and I are divided; but the same Atman is in you and in me. Itself undivided, it exists *as if* divided in all the divided things of the world. This is a very profound idea: how men and women evolve in their knowledge-search. That knowledge-search can go from the *tāmasik* type through the *rājasik* to the highest *sāttvik* type. In the *sattva* type, one comes to this understanding, that behind all these diversities, there is one single truth. That truth he or she grasps. It is just like a physicist searching for a unified field energy. There are different energy fields and the physicist, like Einstein, wants to unify them. There, the knowledge is striving to be *sāttvik.* That these things are all separate, is *rājasik*; and lower than that is *tāmasik.* In India, in our great Advaitic vision, we discovered the One in the many, and the One existing *fully* in each of these particular entities of the world. *Avibhaktam,* 'undivided'; *vibhakteṣu*, 'in all apparently divided things'. This is a very profound idea, extremely subtle. That is why *sāttvik* knowledge is very profound and subtle.

This knowledge has a profound impact on human culture and civilization. No harmony, peace, or understanding can come to a society until this *sāttvik jñāna* comes into the minds of the people. The rest—the *rājasik* and *tāmasik jñānas*—are conflicting, violent, separating, and divisive. If the knowledge that we are all one comes, then peace and other such noble ideas will come. So, *sāttvik* knowledge is the most profound knowledge that we can or should have.

पृथक्त्वेन तु यज्ज्ञानं नानाभावान्पृथग्विधान्।
वेत्ति सर्वेषु भूतेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि राजसम्॥२१॥

Pṛthaktvena tu yajjñānam nānābhāvān pṛthagvidhān;
Vetti sarveṣu bhūteṣu tajjñānam viddhi rājasam —18. 21

'But the knowledge which sees in all beings various entities of distinct kinds as different from one another, know that knowledge as *rājasika.*'

That knowledge is called *rājasik* knowledge. What is that?, *pṛthaktvena tu yat jñānam,* 'that knowledge in which everything is *pṛthak* or separate'; *nānābhāvān,* 'so many different things are there'; *pṛthagvidhān,* 'they are all separate from each other'; *pṛthak* means 'separate'; *vetti,* he or she 'understands like this'; *sarveṣu bhūteṣu,* 'in all the entities of the world'; *tat jñānam viddhi rājasam,* 'know that knowledge to be *rājasik*'.

This is quite harmful for human society; this *rājasik* knowledge is to be transcended at least by some people who will be the guide to others.

यत्तु कृत्स्नवदेकस्मिन् कार्ये सक्तमहैतुकम्।
अतत्त्वार्थवदल्पं च तत्तामसमुदाहृतम्॥२२॥

Yattu kṛtsnavat ekasmin kārye saktam ahaitukam;
Atatvārthavat alpam ca tat tāmasam udāhṛtam — 18. 22

'Whilst that which is confined to one single effect as if it were the whole, without reason, without foundation in truth, and trivial—that is declared to be *tāmasika.*'

That is known as *tāmasik* knowledge. What is that? *Yattu kṛtsnavat ekasmin kārye,* that knowledge which is confined to 'one single thing,

which is a *kārya* or an effect, as if it were all'; one can see only effects; one cannot see what is behind the effects. *Saktam ahaitukam,* and 'attached to that without any reason or thinking behind it'; *atatvārthavad alpam ca,* and 'without any foundation in truth, and small in quantity'; that kind of little knowledge, not at all related with the thing itself, and without foundation in truth, is called *tāmasik* knowledge. That is *alpam* or 'trivial' knowledge.

Only one undivided thing exists in all the divided things of the world; we call it God or Brahman or Atman. Whatever be the language used, that is the Truth behind all these truths. These are all truths, but that is the Truth of all truths. That is how the *Upaniṣads* express it: *etat satyam, tat satyasya satyam,* 'this is truth, but that is the Truth of truths'. This world is truth; but the highest Reality is the Truth of all these truths. That is the language that *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* has used. *Satyasya satyam*—that is a very profound idea. You don't say that the others are all false. They are all there. But if you go through them, there is one truth in all of them. That is the Truth of all these truths. So, Brahman is presented as the Truth behind the truths of this world. This world is truth. The energies functioning in physical nature are truth. The Upaniṣads said, *prāṇāḥ vai satyam*, *teśām eśa satyam,* 'all the *prāṇas* or energies functioning in the world are true. But this Atman is the Truth of that truth'. Therefore, *satyasya satyam* is a very beautiful expression in Vedanta. Swami Vivekananda said in his address before the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893: 'According to the Hindu religion, man travels not from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from a lower truth to a higher truth'. This is truth, a lower truth. But I want to know what is the Truth of this truth. Then you come to *satyasya satyam,* the higher truth. That is *sāttvik jñāna.*

That knowledge which is confined to a single effect, as if it were the whole, without reason, without logic, without foundation in truth, and very trivial, that is *tāmasik* knowledge. Primitive people, who have not had mental training, always understand that there are separate things. Children also have the same idea. But slowly we grow towards the *rājasik* type, and some reach the *sāttvik* type as well. By the time the child grows to be a college student, he or she must be able to develop this *sāttvik* knowledge. Then there is hope for human society. The importance of the *sāttvik* type in any society is that you will find tremendous harmony there.

Take the world of religion. Apart from other aspects of life, in religion everything is separate, true to the *tāmasik* spirit, and the attitude that mine is superior to everybody else's is prevalent. Without any reason such theologians simply assert, 'My god is supreme. My religion is supreme.' Why?, because our books say so. But other books also say so. We cannot find an answer. That kind of assertion makes for a very *tāmasik* type of religion. Then comes the *rājasik* understanding, and the finest is the *sāttvik* understanding—one Truth shining through all these religions. 'Truth is one'; that is what the ancient *Ìg-Veda* of India said: *ekam sat, viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti,* 'Truth is one, sages call it by various names'. Truth itself is one only. There is not a Christian truth or a Muslim truth or a Hindu truth. There is no such difference; Truth is one. We speak of it differently. That is the *sāttvik* understanding in religion. India achieved this *sāttvik* knowledge long ago and has cherished it all through the ages. And therefore, we have harmony compared to any other country in the world because of that *sāttvik* knowledge propagated by our great teachers, beginning from *Ìg-Veda* upto our own Sri Ramakrishna, who said, *yato mat tato path,* 'as many religions, so many pathways to God.' India practised unity in diversity. This spirit of harmony is the greatest contribution of Indian culture. The word is *samanvaya,* 'harmony'. '*Samavāya* or concord alone is correct' is the text of the third century bc Emperor Aśoka's inscriptions on the rocks and pillars in his Mauryan empire. Just imagine that this message was uttered in the third century bc: 'concord alone is true, not discord.' Truth is one, and therefore, 'concord alone is true'; *samavāya eva sādhuḥ,* is the Sanskrit expression. Therefore, this *sāttvik* knowledge is necessary to make for harmony of various religions.

So also it makes for harmony between various languages and racial types. Many a mixed type of people are living in a society. What is it that holds them together?, this *sāttvik* knowledge. In all pluralistic societies we need to develop this *sāttvik* knowledge to establish integration between one human being with other human beings, to establish social peace and harmony. Our philosophy contains this message. And several people have achieved this kind of *sāttvik* knowledge. That is India's experiment for all these five thousand years. We are failing to live by it in the present period due to various extraneous factors. But we hope that we shall overcome that

condition by strengthening this *sāttvik* knowledge in our people. Harmony! In language, culture, social rules and regulations, and in religious practices, let there be any amount of diversity. We don't mind it because we can see the One in the many. That is why India's cultural and political ideal is: unity in diversity. Same is the ideal of the Indonesian state also. In Indonesian language they put it very finely: *Bhinneka ekka tungal*. So, this is the *sāttvik* ideal. For every pluralistic society we need this attitude. In every society, there will always be pluralistic views. A common view alone cannot be there. If Islam first came as a united religion, within a short time it developed into Shia and Sunni. Then they needed *sāttvik* knowledge; otherwise, there will be a constant fight between them as we see in Muslim countries like Pakistan today. India has the largest number of diversity in various planes of life. And all nations need this *sāttvik* knowledge very much.

Today Europe is getting integrated. Not only is Western Europe getting integrated within itself, but also Eastern Europe is coming into the picture. This knowledge will be necessary to make that society unified, healthy, and peaceful. That *sāttvik jñāna* must come to more and more people. You are a Czech, you are a Siberian, a Croatian, a German, a French, or an English—it does not matter; you are all human beings. There is unity between men and women, even though physically, and in languages, you may vary. But spiritually there is absolute unity. The same spiritual reality is in all of us. Therefore, let us live in peace with each other. That conviction will come, and then only can we have a perfectly integrated society or political state.

Then comes the next qualification, and this is in respect of action.

नियतं सङ्गरहितमरागद्वेषतः कृतम्।
अफलप्रेप्सुना कर्म यत्तत्सात्त्विकमुच्यते॥२३॥

Niyatam saṅgarahitam arāgadveṣataḥ kṛtam;
Aphalaprepsunā karma yat tat sāttvikam ucyate —18. 23

'An ordained action, done without attachment, and without love or hatred, by one not desirous of its fruit, is declared to be *sāttvika.*'

First we dealt with *jñāna.* Now we deal with *karma* or action. How do we perform an action so that it becomes a *sāttvik karma?* When a work which is *niyatam,* 'ordained'; *saṅga rahitam,* is performed 'without attachment'; *arāga dveṣataḥ kṛtam,* 'and done without love or hatred'; *aphala prepsunā,* 'by one who is not desirous of the fruit of action'; we do work for serving the whole of humanity, offering the fruit to the Divine. *Yat,* 'a work which is so'; *tat sāttvikam ucyate,* 'that is declared to be *sāttvika.*'

Next comes the definition for *rājasik karma.*

यत्तु कामेप्सुना कर्म साहंकारेण वा पुनः।
क्रियते बहुलायासं तद्राजसमुदाहृतम्॥२४॥

Yattu kāmepsunā karma sāhamkāreṇa vā punaḥ;
Kriyate bahulāyāsam tat rājasam udāhṛtam —18. 24

'But the action which is performed desiring results for oneself, or with self-conceit and with much exhausting effort, is declared to be *rājasika.*'

We can see plenty of this in society all over the world. What is that? When a work is done 'by one who is impelled by a keen selfish desire', *kāmepsunā*, to achieve something for oneself; *sāhamkāreṇa,* 'with a good deal of egoistic impulse'; the feeling that 'I am doing this' is prominent in such a person. *Kriyate bahulāyāsam,* and he or she 'does it with an enormous effort'. Sometimes, we make unnecessary effort. *Tat rājasam udāhṛtam,* 'that kind of *karma* is *rājasik karma.*' We can see this all over society, in India as well as abroad.

अनुबन्धं क्षयं हिंसामनपेक्ष्य च पौरुषम्।
मोहादारभ्यते कर्म यत्तत्तामसमुच्यते॥२५॥

Anubandham kṣayam himsām anapekṣya ca pauruṣam;
Mohāt ārabhyate karma yat tat tāmasam ucyate —18. 25

'That action is declared to be *tāmasik* which is undertaken through delusion, without heed to the consequence, loss (of power and wealth), injury (to others), and beyond (one's own) ability.'

That *karma* is said to be *tāmasik*, 'which is undertaken through delusion', *mohāt ārabhyate.* I take up a *karma* without knowing exactly its aspects; so, I do it out of delusion. I do it without heed to the consequence; it may be harmful, it may be productive of evil. I never consider all that. I have to do that work and that is all what matters. That *karma* may result in loss of my power and wealth also. And injury to others may come out of that *karma.* There is one more qualification, and that is: 'that such work may be beyond one's capacity'. All these constitute *tāmasik karma.* Any action which we do, *anapekṣya ca pauruṣam,* 'which is beyond one's energy and ability', is *tāmasik karma.* We have to take into account both our actual and our potential abilities. Then we can do that work. When we exert beyond our abilities and do it out of delusion, that work becomes a *tāmasik karma.*

We have seen so far *jñāna* and *karma* in their three divisions based on the *guṇas.* Next, we consider *kartā,* 'the person who does the work'.

मुक्तसङ्गोऽनहंवादी धृत्युत्साहसमन्वितः।
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योर्निर्विकारः कर्ता सात्त्विक उच्यते॥२६॥

Muktasaṅgaḥ anahamvādī dhṛtyutsāha samanvitaḥ;
Siddhyasiddhyoḥ nirvikāraḥ kartā sāttvika ucyate —18. 26

'An agent who is free from attachment, non-egoistic, endued with fortitude and enthusiasm, and unaffected in success or failure, is called *sāttvika.*'

That 'doer', *kartā,* is *sāttvik* who has these qualities: *mukta saṅgaḥ,* 'devoid of attachment'; *anahamvādī,* 'one who is not depending on the ego'; *ahamvādī* is one who depends on the 'I', 'I'; and the opposite of it is *an-ahamvādī*, 'one who is not fattening his or her own ego'. *Dhṛti utsāha samanvitaḥ,* 'one who is endowed with two things: *dhṛti* or fortitude, and *utsāha* or enthusiasm'. *Dhṛti*, as I have mentioned earlier, is a great word; it more or less stands for the word 'will' or 'determination'. When we persist in an action, that is called *dhṛti.* If some difficulty comes and we run away; then there is no *dhṛti* in us. Here, the will is there—a pure will, strong and steady. And there is *utsāha* or enthusiasm. We always carry with us our

enthusiasm in the work we do. Then only it is *sāttvika. Siddhyasiddhyoḥ nirvikāraḥ,* 'he or she is not at all disturbed whether the work is going to be fruitful or not'. He or she does not worry about it. The person is actually at work and tries to get the best out of the work; he or she is not agitated by either *siddhi,* 'success', or *asiddhi,* 'failure'. *Kartā sāttvika ucyate,* 'that agent of action is said to be *sāttvika.*'

Then comes the *rājasik* type of worker.

रागी कर्मफलप्रेप्सुर्लुब्धो हिंसात्मकोऽशुचि:।
हर्षशोकान्वित: कर्ता राजस: परिकीर्तित:॥२७॥

Rāgī karmaphalaprepsuḥ lubdhaḥ himsātmakaḥ aśuciḥ;
Harṣaśokānvitaḥ kartā rājasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ — 18. 27

'One who is passionate, desirous of the fruits of action, greedy, malignant, impure, easily elated or dejected, such an agent is called *rājasika.*'

That doer who has the following qualities is called *rājasika: rāgī,* 'full of attachment'; *karmaphalaprepsuḥ,* 'very eager to get the fruits of actions'; *lubdhaḥ,* 'greedy'; *himsātmakaḥ,* 'engaged in violence also'. He or she does actions involving violence and harm to others. *Aśuciḥ,* mind is 'impure'; actions reflect this impurity of the mind. *Harṣaśokānvitaḥ kartā,* 'a worker who is sometimes in *harṣa*, in elation, and sometimes in *śoka*, in depression' in the course of work. That kind of worker is known as *rājasik* worker. Next comes the *tāmasik* worker.

अयुक्त: प्राकृत: स्तब्ध: शठो नैष्कृतिकोऽलस:।
विषादी दीर्घसूत्री च कर्ता तामस उच्यते॥२८॥

Aykutaḥ prākṛtaḥ stabdhaḥ śaṭhaḥ naiṣkṛtiko'lasaḥ;
Viṣādī dīrghasūtrī ca kartā tāmasa ucyate — 18. 28

'Unsteady, vulgar, arrogant, dishonest, malicious, indolent, desponding, and procrastinating, such an agent is called *tāmasika.*'

That *kartā* or agent is a *tāmasik* worker who is *ayuktaḥ,* 'undisciplined in mind'; he or she is without any discipline of the inner system. *Prākṛtaḥ,*

‘very crude’; we can also use the word ‘vulgar’ to describe such a person. *Stabdhaḥ,* ‘arrogant’; *śaṭhaḥ,* ‘dishonest’; *naiṣkṛtikaḥ,* ‘malicious’; *alasaḥ,* ‘indolent or lazy’; *viṣādī,* ‘desponding’; and *dīrghasūtrī,* ‘procrastinating’; what is to be done now will be done later. Such an agent is called *tāmasika.* We can see this in actual operation when we study human life. With variations, we can easily find such types of people.

In English there is a saying, ‘procrastination is thief of time’. I remember an incident; when I was studying in class VII, my teacher came to the classroom. There was no regular class that day. So, he said this: ‘boys, procrastination is the thief of time’. ‘What is that, Sir?’, we asked. We could not make out the meaning. He was a fine type of person. He went to the board and drew a picture of a doll head with four pieces of hair sticking from the back of the head. Then he said, ‘boys, this head is time. It is rolling all the time. It is never quiet. How do you catch this head? How to catch time? When those four pieces of hair come towards you, catch them. If you miss them, then you will have to wait for its next round’. Just catch that hair when it comes towards you. ‘Take time by the four locks’ is the English saying. He was illustrating that on the board. So, the students were happy and they laughed tremendously at the humour of the teacher. Then, he said, ‘boys, you are having irrepressible laughter.’ ‘What is the meaning of the word “irrepressible”, Sir?’, someone asked. He went to the board and wrote the word ‘irrepressible’ in a quick way, and the board fell down. There was still more laughter. That was an interesting incident in our school life. So, in that lesson we learnt that procrastination is the thief of time. So, we have to take time by the four locks. Then we can achieve many things in life. I often tell people, ‘don’t say I do not have time for this and for that’. A trained mind will achieve much in twenty-four hours, which an untrained mind will not achieve. Winston Churchill, you, and I have twenty-four hours a day. But Churchill does so much in twenty-four hours, and we do so little. We don’t know how to train the mind. That is the one lesson to learn. Never complain about time. Complain, rather, about your own mind which doesn’t know how to squeeze time and get the best out of it. So, procrastination is a *tāmasik* quality. That is the main stress in this *Gītā* verse.

Naiṣkṛtikaḥ means ‘malicious’, maligning other people. That tendency is there in plenty in our society today. That is a very *tāmasik* attitude—finding fault, speaking ill of others—and that is to be avoided. They are extremely bad qualities of the human mind. *Viṣādī,* ‘despondent’; occasionally despondency comes. *Dīrghasūtrī,* ‘one who procrastinates’; the attitude, ‘not today, but tomorrow’, ‘not today, but day after tomorrow’. That is the *tāmasik kartā* or worker.

बुद्धेर्भेदं धृतेश्चैव गुणतस्त्रिविधं शृणु।
प्रोच्यमानमशेषेण पृथक्त्वेन धनञ्जय॥२९॥

Buddherbhedam dhṛteścaiva guṇataḥ trividham śṛṇu;
Procyamānam aśeṣeṇa pṛthaktvena dhanañjaya — 18. 29

‘Hear about the triple distinction of intellect and fortitude, according to the *guṇas,* as I declare them exhaustively and severally, O Dhanañjaya (Arjuna).’

This verse tells that a similar classification can be given to *buddhi* or intellect and *dhṛti* or fortitude. Differences in *buddhi* or intellect—*sāttvik, rājasik* and *tāmasik*—exists; similar differences also exists in *dhṛti* or willpower. Listen to Me about these differences when I expound these three differences of the two faculties, intellect and willpower within us, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *Dhṛti*, as I said earlier, is a great word. Without a will, there is no character. Character is centred in a socially oriented will. What kind of will?, socially oriented will—a will which takes into account the welfare of people in society. The motivation is, ‘their welfare’. That will is the highest will we can have. That is called *dhṛti* in Sanskrit. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling that in this verse: *procyamānam*, ‘I am telling you about it clearly’; *pṛthaktvena*, ‘severally’; and *aśeṣeṇa,* ‘exhaustively’. ‘I am going to expound this to you, O Arjuna.’

प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च कार्याकार्ये भयाभये।
बन्धं मोक्षं च या वेत्ति बुद्धिः सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी॥३०॥

Pravṛttim ca nivṛttim ca kāryākārye bhayābhaye;
Bandham mokṣam ca yā vetti buddhiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī—18. 30

‘That intellect which knows the paths of external work and inward meditation, right and wrong action, fear and fearlessness, bondage and liberation, O Pārtha, is *sāttvika.*’

That is *sāttvik buddhi.* What is that? *Sā buddhiḥ*, ‘that intellect’; *yā vetti*, ‘which knows’; *pravṛtti* or ‘action’; and *nivṛtti* or ‘withdrawal from action’; *kārya akārye,* ‘what is to be done, and what is not to be done’; *bhaya abhaye,* ‘fear and fearlessness’; *bandham mokṣam ca,* ‘bondage and liberation’; *pārtha sāttvikī,* that intellect which understands all these, ‘O Arjuna, is *sāttvik.*’ That intellect which knows the path of work and of inward meditation, what is to be done and what is to be renounced, what is right action and what is wrong action, fear and fearlessness, bondage and liberation, O Arjuna, is *sāttvik.* In comparison with the *rājasik* and *tāmasik buddhi*, we have to understand the beauty of this *sāttvik buddhi.*

यया धर्ममधर्मं च कार्यं चाकार्यमेव च।
अयथावत्प्रजानाति बुद्धिः सा पार्थ राजसी॥३१॥

Yayā dharmam adharmam ca kāryam cākāryameva ca;
Ayathāvat prajānāti buddhiḥ sā pārtha rājasī — 18. 31

‘That intellect which has a distorted apprehension of *dharma* and its opposite, and also of right action and its opposite, O Pārtha, is *rājasik.*’

That intellect which *ayathāvat prajanāti*, ‘apprehends in a distorted way’ *dharma* and *adharma*, and also right and wrong action, is *rājasik.* The intellectual perception is not straight; it is distorted. That intellect, O Pārtha, is *rājasik.* It cannot discriminate between *dharma* and *adharma,* between right and wrong action, etc. Such an intellect is *rājasik.*

अधर्मं धर्ममिति या मन्यते तमसावृता।
सर्वार्थान्विपरीतांश्च बुद्धिः सा पार्थ तामसी॥३२॥

Adharmam dharmamiti yā manyate tamasāvṛtāḥ;
Sarvārthān viparītāmśca buddhiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī — 18. 32

‘That intellect which, enveloped in darkness, regards *adharma* as *dharma,* and views all things in a perverted light, O Pārtha, is *tāmasik.*’

That intellect is *tāmasīk* which is enveloped in darkness with regard to *adharma* and *dharma.* Such an intellect takes *adharma* as *dharma* and *dharma* as *adharma.* Such a person does not have correct discrimination, and views everything in a perverted opposite light. That intellect, O Pārtha, is *tāmasik.* All things are seen in their inverted perspective. He or she understands everything in their opposite aspect. What is right, he or she takes to be wrong; and what is wrong, is taken to be right. What is injustice, he or she takes to be justice. This is so because, *tamasāvṛtāḥ,* the intellect is covered by the darkness of delusion, ignorance.

धृत्या यया धारयते मनःप्राणेन्द्रियक्रियाः।
योगेनाव्यभिचारिण्या धृतिः सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी॥३३॥

Dhṛtyā yayā dhārayate manaḥ prāṇendriya kriyāḥ;
Yogena avyabhicāriṇyā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī —18. 33

'The fortitude by which the functions of the mind, the *prāṇa,* and the senses, O Pārtha, are regulated, that fortitude, unswerving through *yoga*, is *sāttvika.*'

Next comes *dhṛti,* an important element in human life. All our emotions are full of energy. If they are well disciplined and made into a faculty in the human system as will, then great things become possible. How to develop the power of will?, by exercising will in the right direction. By that way alone does the will develop. Will can be a Hitler's will, bringing misery to millions of people. But it can also be a Buddha's will, bringing happiness and peace to millions of people. So, *dhṛti* or the tremendous power of will, is necessary. But it must be directed into the proper channel.

In this verse, the description is given of what *sāttvik dhṛti* is. *Dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī,* 'O Arjuna, that will power is *sāttvik'; dhṛtyā yayā dhārayate,* 'that will by which is regulated'; *manaḥ prāṇendriya kriyāḥ*, 'all the actions of the mind, vital force and sense organs'. All the components of the human system are well developed, well held together, just like a charioteer holding the reins of horses with great effort. Then only can one travel directly to the goal. Similarly, in the body of the human system there are so many energies. Many of them are self-cancelling, opposed to each

other. But when *dhṛti* comes in, one organizes all of them, holds them together, and goes directly to the goal. What is that strength by which one controls the mind, the *prāṇa* and the *indriyas,* disciplines them, and makes them go in the right direction?*, yogena avyabhicāriṇyā,* 'by *avyabhicārī yoga*' or '*yoga* which is well-regulated'. What kind of *yoga?,* never missing, ever present *yoga*; *yoga* endowed with that *śakti; dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī*, 'that will is *sāttvik*, O Arjuna'. This is not a magical or mystical aim. This is *everybody's possibility.* I want to transform my psychic energy into willpower and give it humanist direction. I struggle to organize all my energies and make for that determination, for that will. And then I turn it to human purposes. That is called *sāttvik* will. If it goes in the other way, then it is the *rājasik* or *rākṣasa* will, or the *tāmasik* will. More the will is *sāttvik*, the better it is. More blessing will come to society through such *sāttvik dhṛti* or fortitude by which the functions of the mind, *prāṇa* and the senses are regulated and disciplined. That fortitude becomes unswerving, and steady through *yoga;* it goes on all the time and never weakens. That is *sāttvik dhṛti.* In fact, it is a great blessing to acquire such a will in human life. If all our efforts could go in the direction of obtaining such a will, it will be wonderful, it will be the consummation of our education.

Buddhi and *dhṛti* are close to each other. *Buddhi* or intellect is the capacity for discrimination. *Dhṛti* or willpower is the motive power that takes us forward. So, *buddhi* and *dhṛti* always go together. One aspect of *buddhi* is *dhṛti.* A will is that which makes things move; mere knowledge does not make things move. It is the willpower that makes things move. When prompted by the will, knowledge grows into action; knowledge flows into world-moving activity. That is the role of *dhṛti,* a pure will.

Swami Vivekananda said, the pure and strong will is divine, is God Himself. Whoever has such a will is simply a divine person. God Himself has got Will. In our philosophy, we speak of *icchā, jñāna* and *kriyā* as three aspects of the Divine. *Icchā* is 'desire'; *jñāna* is 'knowledge' of the expected desire. And *kriyā* is 'action' following that desire. The whole of creation is the product of *jñāna, icchā* and *kriyā* of the Divine Personality. We, as individuals, also have that *jñāna, icchā* and *kriyā.* We have to refine it, develop it; till now it is under the control of the genetic or sensory system, and so, highly limited in its operation. Therefore, it is a challenge to

us to expand and refine it. Take up the challenge, try to refine the energy system; let *tāmasik* energy refine into *rājasik* energy, and *rājasik* into *sāttvik* energy. That is why evolution of will within the human system is the best type of education that we can have. A strong, steady, and humanly oriented will brings blessing to millions of people.

Reason or knowledge can give only facts. But to convert all that knowledge into action, one needs *dhṛti,* determination, will. That will must be well-disciplined and pure. Then it will be a socially oriented will, a will concerning the welfare of all. That is the *yoga* taught by Śrī Kṛṣṇa. We need willpower to achieve anything. But that will must be oriented to the welfare of society as a whole—not for one's own aggrandisement. *That* is the type of will *Gītā* advocates for all of us. This has to be developed *within* ourselves by our own effort.

Gandhiji had that type of will. He was a man of tremendous *dhṛti*. He regulated his life very wonderfully. Every minute was spent for the good of men and women. He was a wonderful type of person. We have read about his life. He regularly woke up early in the morning at 4 o'clock. Then a prayer, a walk, and then the actual actions begin: duty, working for the nation, etc. In everything he was very regular; his watch was always used by him to be punctual in everything. If a person came for an interview with him for two minutes, at the end of that time he would show him the watch: 'it is time for you to go, because there are others waiting'. So, he was a man of tremendous regularity and efficiency, but always human. He never tried to injure people. We find the following story in his life. When he once visited the Viceroy Lord Erwin in Simla, the talks went on the whole night up to 3 in the morning. And at 3 o'clock he came back and straight went to bed and slept. He could even sleep at will. But, exactly at 4 am., his scheduled time, he got up and also started his morning work. Here we can see the action of this type of *dhṛti.* The whole of that *dhṛti* is illumined to give a luminous *dhṛti,* ever engaged in the good of the nation. How blessed we in India shall be, if each of us could get a fraction of that will which one sees in men like Gandhiji.

Yoga which is *avyabhicārī* or 'constant', steady. Not that today you are in *yoga*, and tomorrow it has gone away. This *yoga* has become *a part of*

the human system. In Gandhiji's life, one can see that. *Avyabhicāriṇyā yogena* can be seen in that life—steady in *yoga,* with no kind of setting and rising. That is what all of us have to develop in ourselves and in our children. When the *Gītā* will be studied by the whole nation and by the people abroad, and when lot of thinking goes into it, I am sure, that little by little people will develop this type of character. All the power needed for it —the power of knowledge, the power of inspiration—is here. But one has to experiment with these teachings in our lives. Our life itself must be an experiment. 'Am I developing that will? Am I developing that *buddhi*?'—that questioning must come to oneself. Thus, life becomes geared to high human purposes. That will make for a heaven on earth. Our own India will become a heaven when our people will have this type of character that is expounded in the *Gītā.*

This subject becomes more significant when you deal with character—a human being developing character energy. Psychic energy in us is in a raw state, like crude oil. We process it; that is called character development. Out of the processing of that psychic energy, which is done in the context of inter-human relationships and day-to-day actions, will come *buddhi,* that serene reason, and *dhṛti* i.e. will, within the human system. There will be absolute clarity of perception and judgement. That knowledge flows into action and changes the world around you in terms of human development, happiness and welfare. This is the work everybody has to be engaged in from childhood onwards. What am I doing to my psychic energy? I am expressing it in action, but am I developing an integrated energy system within myself with a touch of the humanistic impulse? Then only will I be an ornament to society. This kind of development is what makes education close to spiritual thought and philosophy—human development by which he or she becomes a blessing to society, not a curse. We can develop into a *sāttvik* person; we can also develop into a *tāmasik* or *rājasik* type of person, and be like a *rākṣasa* destroying everybody's happiness. Today, we have too many of the *rākṣasa* type. Therefore, this is the challenge: how can I convert this crude energy system into that holy and divine type? The knowledge of the *guṇas* is helpful to us in this process of refining our energies, just like refining crude oil and making it into beautiful petroleum products. So also, we process crude psychic energy. Here we do it from

tamas to *rajas* and from *rajas* to *sattva,* by refining it further and further. And the finest refined state is the *sattva* mind, ever serene and full of compassion, full of the feeling of oneness with all.

India today has plenty of *rājasik* energy. That is highly welcome; it was not there before. But we need to transform it into the *sāttvik* type—creative, constructive, and making for the happiness and all-round welfare. That is *sāttvik* energy system. That is the goal of India in our present condition when we are developing into a constructive, developed nation. Nobody can do this for you. You have to do it for yourself. From the age of five onwards, this development must come into the life of every child through occasional oriental guidance. Little by little this development must take place, but the picture of your goal must be kept clear. So, this kind of training of the will is the work we have before us in education and in religion.

The word *buddhi* came for the first time in the second chapter of this *Gītā*. There Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said: 'take refuge in *buddhi.*' Try to develop your *buddhi.* Your whole life will be transformed when *buddhi* comes into the picture. That *buddhi* is the finest evolution of the entire psychic energy in the human being. It will be luminous, critical, and full of the power of action because the will or *dhṛti* is integrated to knowledge at the level of *buddhi*.

The *buddhi* and the *dhṛti* go together; here, in the *Gītā,* they have been discussed together: the first three verses on *buddhi* and the next three verses on *dhṛti.* This is the *dhṛti* of the *sāttvik* type, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The mind, *prāṇa* and senses are controlled by that *dhṛti.* How is it done? *yogena avyabhicāriṇyā,* 'by the one-pointed unity with the Atman behind *dhṛti*'. Behind the will is the Atman, the immortal Self in all of us. When that Atman has an impact on the will, that will becomes something completely different. It will find expression as: 'I am one with all', and hence that will can do no harm to anybody. This is a wonderful state.

In the West, they have been discussing this subject, but have failed to get any inkling as to the Divine within the human being. There, the human being is essentially evil and subject to sin. There is no divine spark in the human being according to the Christian theology taught in the West, though

Jesus Christ never taught it; on the contrary, he taught that the 'kingdom of God is within us'. If that is so, if there is no divine spark in the human being, then the will becomes the instrument of that strongly developed ego in the human system. It can only bring immense evil. It is this wrong development that took place in Western thought more powerfully in a philosopher like Nietzsche. He spoke of a superman. The superman has a tremendous willpower. He can transform this world. But for what purpose? 'The superman comes on the scene in violence of deed and demeanour', said Nietzsche. Why?, because he doesn't realize that he is one with others. He has come to dominate the rest of the world. That is the nature of the superman.

In the *Gītā,* the superman or the superwoman becomes different. He or she feels one with all, and comes as a source of blessing to all. That is the concept of super-person in Vedanta. That *dhṛti* is what we are referring to here. That universal dimension to *dhṛti* comes because, *yogena avyabhicāriṇyā,* the will has been connected through *yoga* with the supreme powerhouse, namely, the Atman, the Infinite Self, of the nature of Pure Consciousness, One and non-dual, the same in all beings. When that connection comes, the will becomes transformed. That is the nature of the super-person that India advocates—one who has developed infinite compassion. Buddha was a man of compassion. He was certainly a superman with infinite compassion. In our times, there was Gandhiji, a superman, a *Mahātmā*. *Mahātmā* means superman; his Atman is one with all, not an isolated self. So, there was in him infinite compassion. This is the direction of human evolution. And now this philosophy attracts everyone in the West. The old idea has worked itself out in a tremendous burst of suffering for humanity, because it was nature's superman that became incarnate as the Nazi movement and Nazi leader, Adolf Hitler. He was a superman. He did not care for any of the treaties his country had signed. He did not care for all the niceties. He came with violence of deed and demeanour. And he did it. But the whole thing collapsed. That philosophy was destroyed in the Second World War. Today, Germany—the East and the West—is united; the whole of Europe is in excitement today. A big thing is opening out. It is this philosophy of the *Gītā* that inspires them today. This super-person of the *Gītā* with infinite compassion is the ideal. And when

you talk on the subject, everybody would listen. I experienced it during my cultural lecture tour of seventeen European countries in 1961. They want to know what that human development is. What a wonderful idea that is! You *are* a super-person. Be like the Buddha with infinite compassion—*sarvabhūta hite ratāḥ,* that is how the *Gītā* puts it, 'engaged in the happiness and welfare of all beings'. *That* is the super-person. I am now an ordinary person with respect to my own mental and physical system. That is a super-person who can enter into thousands of minds, thousands of hearts, feel one with them all, and serve their interests. *That* is the super-person. Everyone of us must be at least 1 per cent of that super-person. We have to be on the road to development into that infinite compassion. 'Go ahead', 'Go ahead'. Now it is one per cent; make it 100 per cent later on. That is the nature of real human education and the goal of human evolution according to our age-old Vedanta. You can find these ideas appealing to the human minds both in East and West—only you have to put it across that way. This is your *own* development, not meant merely for some ascetics in the forest. It has relevance to you and to me, in the midst of work we do here in the day-to-day world. In the course of work we can develop this inner dimension—a growth *within* along with action *without* together makes for the *yoga* of the *Gītā.* They are 'the salt of the earth', to use an expression used by Jesus Christ. Others can be salted with that salt.

In the second chapter itself Śrī Kṛṣṇa defined *yoga* as *karmasu kauśalam,* 'efficiency, dexterity, in action'. When we work, we produce goods and services to the people. That is one aspect of work. But, along with that, we also improve our inner life, make it purer, nobler, and more compassionate. That is the second dimension of efficiency. So, combine outward productive efficiency and inward spiritual efficiency. They go together in the teaching of *yoga* in the *Bhagavad Gītā.*

We have seen a strong will developing in children; much of it is a very low level will—only a servant of the ego. I have an ego, and I have a strong will. 'Strong-willed people' is the term we use. But, actually it is not pure will. It is mere obstinacy: 'I won't change my attitude at all'—that is how it gets expressed. That is not will. Will is prepared to change when one knows it to be wrong. That will is not obstinate. We generally mistake an obstinate person for a powerfully willed person. Not at all; will is more malleable. It

always tries to see what is good, what is right; it will change if necessary. That is the nature of pure will. But an obstinate person can never change his or her stand. We have plenty of obstinate people in society. And they mistake it for a strong will. A strong willed person can change, can accept that he or she is wrong, because truth is the goal, and not merely holding on to a pet opinion. That distinction must be made clear.

Next comes *rājasik dhṛti.*

यया तु धर्मकामार्थान् धृत्या धारयतेऽर्जुन।
प्रसङ्गेन फलाकांक्षी धृतिः सा पार्थ राजसी॥३४॥

Yayā tu dharmakāmārthān dhṛtyā dhārayate arjuna;
Prasaṅgena phalākāmkṣī dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha rājasī — 18. 34

'But the fortitude by which one regulates (one's mind) to *dharma* or science of values, sensory desires, and wealth, desirous of the fruits of each from attachment, that, O Pārtha, is *rājasik.*'

That *dhṛti* or will is of the *rājasik* type; what is its quality?, *yayā tu dharmakāmārthān dhṛtyā dhārayate arjuna,* 'the will that is engaged in manipulating one's own *dharma, artha,* and *kāma*, i.e. moral action, acquirement of wealth, and satisfaction of sensory cravings O Arjuna'. But, *prasaṅgena,* 'through attachment'; and *phalākāmkṣī,* 'desirous of the fruits'. The will is going in the direction of acquiring the fruits of action: 'I must get the fruit of action'; and that is owing to attachment. He or she works, and he or she is also moral; and moreover, he or she is also searching for satisfaction. But, in all these, he or she is *phalākāmkṣī,* having great interest in obtaining profit for oneself. That kind of *dhṛti* is *rājasik dhṛti.*

Most people have this kind of *dhṛti.* And it is not too bad. It is good because that touch of *dharma* is there. Here 'I am thinking of society as a whole'. In fact, often I speak of self-interest as that which most people strive for. But, can you put a little touch of enlightenment to it? That means, *think of others also* along with your welfare. You want welfare; there is no harm in that because you are not an ascetic. But along with that, think of others also. That is called a citizen in today's language. I am a citizen of

India; I do not want only *my* comfort and welfare. I want the welfare of all my people. Then you get an enlightened self-interest—a wonderful concept in political thought which first developed in England. If that enlightenment is not there, it becomes sheer self-interest. You have to be alert that it is not a case of crude self-interest. People who practise enlightened self-interest have to be very alert to see that that touch of enlightenment remains. If that goes away, then it becomes crude self-interest. We have the saying of the British Prime Minister Disraeli (who was twice Prime Minister in 1868 and 1874-1880) describing the nature of British Foreign Policy a hundred years ago. It is probably he, or somebody else, who said that Britain has no permanent friends, no permanent enemies, but only permanent self-interest. Every country does the same. This is an open saying; it is called political morality. When you come to individual life, it can go beyond the State's political morality. States can never have high morals; some morality will be there. But, you and I can have much higher morals than what a political system dictates to us. Therefore, this *rājasik* type of *dhṛti* is good, but we should try to make it oriented to the *sāttvik* level. So, the feeling must come that this is good, but there is something better. And the human mind must always be asking, 'which is more excellent?' So, 'excel yourself', must be the language at this level of *rajas*. 'I am now here, but I shall excel myself; I shall go one step higher, and then yet another step higher.' If you get a second class, try to get a first class in the examination. Never say, 'I have done bad.' Not from bad to good, but from good to better, and to still better, and to the best. That is the language of Vedanta. So, excellence is the word. Every child must be told, 'Excel yourself. You have done well; do better.'

Prasaṅgena phalākāmkṣī, 'desirous of the fruits through attachment'; the attitude that 'I want the fruit of my action to come to me.' *Dhṛti sā pārtha rājasī,* 'that kind of will, O Arjuna, is *rājasik.*' You can study in yourself and find whether the will is *rājasik* or *sāttvik,* and give it a direction according to your strength. It is not that every day you must strain yourself to rise to the highest stage. Not at all. But, know that there is something better, and try to struggle for it little by little.

Next comes the *tāmasik* will, which is not at all good and of a very low level. It is not fit for a real human being. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa describes it as follows:

यया स्वप्नं भयं शोकं विषादं मदमेव च।
न विमुञ्चति दुर्मेधा धृतिः सा तामसी मता॥३५॥

Yayā svapnam bhayam śokam viṣādam madameva ca;
Na vimuñcati durmedhā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī — 18. 35

'That fortitude by which a stupid person does not give up sleep, fear, grief, despondency, and also overweening conceit, O Pārtha, is *tāmasik.*'

Arjuna, that *dhṛti* or will is *tāmasik*. What kind of will is *tāmasik*?, *yayā svapnam bhayam śokam viṣādam madameva ca; yayā*, 'by which', he or she does not give up these states of the mind: *svapnam,* 'sleep'; *bhayam,* 'fear'; *śokam,* 'sorrow' or 'grief'; *viṣāda,* 'a stronger type of grief' or 'despondency', anxiety and suffering; and *madam,* 'inebriated state'. This is not at all a normal state of mind. That state of will is called a *tāmasik* type of will. *Durmedhā,* he or she is 'an un-enlightened person', a stupid person. *Sumedhā* means one who is 'of a good mind', and *duḥ medhā* or *durmedhā* is one with a 'bad mind'. *Na vimuñcati,* he or she 'does not give up' these things. He or she holds on to these with a strong determination, and therefore there is no progress. That is a very low level. Being born a human being, why stay at the animal level? Animals are more and more of this nature. Why should *I* be so?, that thought has not come to a person of this type. The will is there, but it is confined to submergence in the organic system. That is all what it seeks. That kind of will is *tāmasik. Bhayam* is considered to be *tāmasik.* In *sattva* there is no *bhayam* or fear. Fearlessness is the only virtue people have to cultivate.

Among all the religions and philosophies of the world, in Vedanta alone we find no place for fear. *Bhayam* is no virtue at all; so, it is condemned. *Abhayam* is the first virtue to be developed according to the *Gītā* (16. 1): *Abhayam sattvasamsuddhiḥ.* When we realize God, what happens to us? We become fearless, as it is said in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.* In *bhakti* also, when we realize the Divine Person, we become fearless. *Gacchatām akuto bhayam,* says the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* 'we reach that state which is called "Where is fear? Where is fear?"' *Akuto bhayam* is a beautiful expression. These are the descriptions given in our philosophical and spiritual literature.

We have fear just as every animal has it. We see a bird on a tree, and if we go near it, we find it is full of fear. Somebody is coming to destroy me —that fear is there and it flies away. Human beings also have that fear. When we come out of our homes, there is this fear. And if there is too much crime in society, every citizen will be full of fear. I went to a house in one of the cities of America and wanted to meet somebody in the house for giving a small telephonic message. People won't open the door at all. They fear something wrong might happen. So, they opened the door just a little. Sometimes they will look through a glass viewer to see whether the visitor is a good person or not. Then, even if they understand that the person is good, still they won't open the door fully. They are full of fear because they are living in a very uncertain society. So much of crime is there and so they do not know what will happen. So, fear grips us in society because there is plenty of *tāmasik* elements. But it has no virtue. It is better to avoid fear and be fearless. Have faith in others. Why should one be full of fear? That kind of change must come in individual and collective thinking. That is a highly developed society. A society is developed not because there is plenty of money in it, but because there is plenty of mutual trust. There fearlessness becomes natural and spontaneous. That way you can evaluate the progress of a society. Our Indian society is not at all in that high level now. It is extremely full of fear; it was not so earlier. Today we have all types of fear in India. It only shows that we have a long way to go towards a healthy human society, where all can trust each other with absolutely no fear. Says the *Mahābhārata* (12. 68. 32, Bhandarkar edition):

Striyaśca āpuruṣā mārgam sarvālamkāra bhūṣitāḥ
Nirbhayāḥ pratipadyante yadā rakṣati bhūmipaḥ —

'If a state is well-governed, even a girl can go through all the streets with all her ornaments, fearlessly, without any masculine protection'.

What a long way we have to go to get such a society. We are going in the other direction now! Not only are girls afraid, even men are afraid. Even politicians are afraid. Full of fear—that is the nature of society today. There is *tamas* controlling *rajas.* That is the language of the *Gītā.*

Then comes the distinction in the nature of happiness, *sukham*, according to the *guṇas*: *sukham* also belongs to three types—*sattva, rajas,*

and *tamas.*

सुखं त्विदानीं त्रिविधं शृणु मे भरतर्षभ।
अभ्यासाद्रमते यत्र दु:खान्तं च निगच्छति॥३६॥

Sukham tvidānīm trividham śṛṇu me bharatarṣabha;
Abhyāsāt ramate yatra duḥkhāntam ca nigacchati — 18. 36

'And now hear from Me, O bull of the Bhāratas, also of the threefold happiness, which one learns to enjoy by habit, and by which one comes to the end of pain.'

Arjuna! Listen to Me about *sukham*, 'happiness', which is *trividham*, 'of three types'. *Abyāsāt ramate yatra,* 'that *sukham* which comes by practise, gives you great delight'; whenever you get *sukham* or happiness, it is owing to practice or habit. Naturally, you are highly delighted with it. And, *duḥkhāntam ca nigacchati,* 'you also achieve the end of all sorrow'. That is the happiness we are aiming at. But we pass through various stages of happiness. First, *sāttvik,* then *rājasik,* and then *tāmasik.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa is describing these three in the coming verses.

यत्तदग्रे विषमिव परिणामेऽमृतोपमम्।
तत्सुखं सात्त्विकं प्रोक्तमात्मबुद्धिप्रसादजम्॥३७॥

Yat tat agre viṣamiva pariṇāme amṛtopamam;
Tat sukham sāttvikam proktam ātmabuddhi prasādajam—18. 37

'That which is like poison at first, but like nectar at the end; that happiness is declared to be *sāttvik,* which is born of the serenity of the self and intellect'.

A very wonderful description of *sāttvik sukham* is found in this verse. That is *sāttvik sukha* which is full of sorrow at its commencement, but ends up in high happiness and removal of tension. *Agre viṣam,* 'at the beginning it is like poison'; *pariṇāme amṛta upamam,* 'at the end it is like nectar'; that kind of *sukham* is *sāttvik sukha.* Without a struggle one will not get that *sukha.* So, there is a period of struggle, a period of effort in the beginning; that is a little unhappy period. We don't want that unhappiness. We

straightaway want happiness; that cannot be. We have to put in a little struggle. *Átmabuddhi prasādajam,* that happiness 'is born of the *buddhi* which is serene and calm'. That is the happiness that comes to one at the level of *sattva. Prasāda* means 'serene'. Water is muddy; we put some chemical in it, and it becomes absolutely clean. It becomes transparent. The mind also becomes pure like that. Our own intellect becomes transformed into a clear thinking, clear seeing instrument. That is what *sattva* happiness confers on you. In India it is held that the words of the elders may be unpleasant in the beginning but are very pleasant at the end. That is one statement. But we must have the patience to withstand that initial unpleasantness so that we can have the pleasantness later. But then, we want immediate pleasantness. That will be bad for us.

विषयेन्द्रियसंयोगाद्यत्तदग्रेऽमृतोपमम्।
परिणामे विषमिव तत्सुखं राजसं स्मृतम्॥३८॥

Viṣayendriya samyogāt yat tat agre amṛtopamam;
Pariṇāme viṣamiva tat sukham rājasam smṛtam — 18. 38

'That happiness which arises from the contact of a sense object with the sense organ, and which is at first like nectar, but at the end is like poison, that happiness is declared to be *rājasik.*'

This verse tells us what is *rājasik* happiness. That happiness comes, *viṣayendriya samyogāt,* 'from the contact of the sense organs with the sense objects'; and *agre amṛta upamam*, 'its beginning is pleasant'. Therefore, we get attached to it. But, *pariṇāme viṣam iva,* 'eventually it becomes like poison'; *tat sukham rājasam smṛtam*, 'that is called *rājasik* happiness'. Fine in the beginning but bad in the end is *rājasik sukha.* A child only wants to play with toys. It is very happy, very pleasant. The child never wants to go to school, never wants to study. Later on, he or she grows into being a nobody in society! He or she does not develop anything. A little effort is necessary to achieve your own welfare in society. So, be unhappy to begin with, put in a little effort and struggle. Without struggle, there is no knowledge. Without seeking, you don't have science. That is the language: seeking is the essence of science. I don't want to seek, yet I want science; that way you will get only titbits of science, what you call the gadgets of

science. I will have a transistor in my hand and say that I have science with me. That kind of science one can have, but one will not get scientific thinking, and scientific knowledge that way. You will be like a bull with a radio attached to its head.

Nowhere it has been so well recognized in theory as in India. We call education a *tapas*. *Vidyā* or knowledge is a *tapas;* you have to struggle for it. But we are the least interested in that *tapas* today. Our definition is good; only we do not follow it. You want an easy education with no trouble at all. In the West, they still struggle for knowledge. We are far behind from that point of view. Students go to libraries, read original books, try to understand what is what. That still goes on in the West. Here many in India don't want all that. There is no serious feeling. If you somehow manage to pass the examination, by hook or by crook, that is enough—but *that* is not education. Why?, because it is pleasant and you do not get any knowledge out of it. One remains undeveloped. There is no precise thinking, no precise speaking. A person with knowledge can express wonderful ideas in a few sentences. But these people write a whole hundred pages, and yet everything is confusion. Therefore, the necessity of struggle to achieve the best of knowledge and happiness is very relevant in human life.

This *rājasik sukha* is *amṛta* or nectar in the beginning but *viṣa* or poison in the end. The other, the *sāttvik sukha*, is like *viṣa* in the beginning but *amṛta* in the end. Then what is *tāmasik* happiness?

यदग्रे चानुबन्धे च सुखं मोहनमात्मनः।
निद्रालस्यप्रमादोत्थं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम्॥३९॥

Yadagre cānubandhe ca sukham mohanam ātmanaḥ;
Nidrā ālasya pramādottham tat tāmasam udāhṛtam—18. 39

'That happiness which begins and ends in self-delusion arising from sleep, indolence, and miscomprehension, that is declared to be *tāmasik.*'

That happiness is of the *tāmasik* type which *agre,* 'at the beginning', and *anubandhe ca,* 'also in the end', is absolutely below par; it makes for, *mohanam ātmanaḥ*, 'the delusion of oneself', of the human heart. *Nidrā ālasya pramādottham,* 'originating from *nidrā* or sleep, *ālasya* or

indolence, and *pramāda* or miscomprehension'—sleepiness, laziness, and delusion. Out of these only that happiness can come. *Tat tāmasam udāhṛtam,* 'that happiness is declared to be *tāmasik*'. So, you can see that there are three kinds of happiness, whether you look around you or within you. You will find some outpost of one or the other in or around you. This knowledge is good. Knowledge is meant to help you to go for something better and still better. There alone is evolution, there alone is development. One need not remain at the same stage. There is always something higher and still higher. That is what a human being should seek for—to rise to high and higher levels. So, the only clarion call given by *Yajur Veda* is: 'march on, march on', *caraiveti*, *caraiveti*. Do not stay put; do not stagnate at any particular level. This is the only caution given by Vedanta. *Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata*, 'Arise awake'; *Egiye jāo, egiye jāo*, 'go onward, go onward', as Sri Ramakrishna said in Bengali. *Áge baḍho, āge baḍho*, is the expression in Hindi. Don't stay at one particular level.

When we speak of a *vānaprastha* life in India, what does that mean? It means 'March on! March on!' We have been busy with earning money, enjoying life, getting name and fame, leading a family life, etc. It was all beautiful. But we should not continue it too long. There is a time when we should say 'stop!' There is something better, something still higher. This is very much accepted by men like Carl Jung, that Swiss psychologist, in his book *Modern Man in Search of a Soul.* Should we continue indefinitely this life of earning money and enjoyment at the sensory level? Sometime we must be able to stop it, so that inner development can take place. We have neglected it in the course of this struggle. Now we have to do that! Jung calls these worldly acquisitions, *achievement*. He calls inner development by that name *culture*. True culture is something internal; how many degrees one has got is 'achievement'. How much money one has donated, how many awards one has received—these are all achievements. Good! But do not continue this too long. Then he gives a beautiful idea. Achievement is meant for the forenoon of human life. He divides life into two: forenoon, and afternoon. Up to noon you can have achievement: education, job, money-making, family rearing, acquiring name & fame in society, etc. All these are achievement. Then comes the afternoon of life. Do not carry on this to the afternoon. Then he warns people: Those who carry on to the

afternoon the philosophy of the forenoon, are bound to pay a heavy price for that mistake, namely, diminution of personality. Personality becomes smaller and still smaller. 'Arrested human development' will take place. Much greater development could have taken place. This is the language the Indian philosophers have used. There is nothing to be looked down upon. We should finish it and march on without stagnating. One does not look down upon any stage of life. When we become older, we do not look down upon our life as a child. That was also beautiful. But now it is not beautiful. If one remains a child even after he or she has grown up, that is not correct. I must go to the next development, to the next stage of life. That is what is meant by this summons: 'march on'. Suppose we don't listen to this call to march on, we will be thrown aside on the sand; the current of life will go on without us. We then become frustrated. The word 'frustration' comes again and again in modern life and literature. Why is there frustration?, because we continued in a particular line which we should have left behind. There are other things to do than what we did earlier. Because we continued in it, we became unfit for higher things. And therefore, life continued to flow on leaving us on the sand, like waves throwing objects on the sand, and itself going on into the sea. That is what happens to such people. Frustration comes when we do not continue our progress in life and get stagnant at a particular level. Life should not stay stagnant; it must march on. So we remain an absolutely stagnant pool by the side of the river that is flowing towards the sea. The word *samsāra* indicates 'stagnation' at the sensory level. Do not be a *samsārī*, means, we should not get stagnant. It does not mean that we should not have a house, a husband or a wife, or children, etc. No! We can have all these, but we should not stagnate. We have to find the answer for ourself: 'what is next? what is next?', in Śaṅkara's language: *tataḥ kim, tataḥ kim, tataḥ kim.*

This occurs in Śaṅkarācārya's famous song. What a wonderful language he has used! Let us have plenty of money; but the mind—if it is healthy—will ask us this question: *Tataḥ kim?, tataḥ kim?, tataḥ kim?* What next? What next? What next? If we suppress the mind, it will not ask us this question. A healthy mind must ask this question. I am playing with toys as a child, and the mind says: *tataḥ kim*?, what next? The child then grows up and says, 'Mother, I want a book', 'I want to go to school'. That means the

child has taken the first step towards higher development. If that is stifled in the child, that child becomes a moron, very undeveloped, a low level child. No child likes to be so. Vedanta therefore treats us as human beings in search of excellence—one excellence giving place to another excellence, a third excellence, and so on. That is the meaning and process of human evolution. So, this description of happiness through the three *guṇas* is very important for a society, especially in India, which is being thrown into a stagnant consumerist civilization now. There is tremendous consumerism—eating, drinking—and the television is very helpful for developing this consumerist mentality. The West has already passed through it. We are also passing through it. We can't avoid it, but we can fortify ourselves with a proper philosophy. That 'march on, march on' philosophy must be there with us. The younger generation must be able to say in respect of consumerism, 'I don't need it; I can do without it.' That kind of attitude will be very healthy. A father can play with toys with children to encourage the children. But that is not his line. He has something better to engage in. In this way, we can manipulate the stifling conditions in a consumerist civilization—not to remain at that stage stifling, but to grow into a higher and still higher level of development and fulfilment.

Now, in verse 40, we are getting a general statement.

न तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिवि देवेषु वा पुनः।
सत्त्वं प्रकृतिजैर्मुक्तं यदेभिः स्यात्त्रिभिर्गुणैः॥४०॥

Na tadasti pṛthivyām vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ;
Sattvam prakṛtijaiḥ muktam yat ebhiḥ syāt tribhirguṇaiḥ—18. 40

'There is no entity on earth, or again in heaven among the *devas,* that is devoid of these three *guṇas* born of *Prakṛti.*'

There is nothing in the three worlds which is untouched by the three *guṇas,* which is un-influenced by the three *guṇas. Sattvam* here means 'entity', anywhere in the world; *na tat asti satvam,* 'there is no entity'; *pṛthivyām,* 'on earth'; or *divi deveṣu vā punaḥ,* 'again in heaven among the gods'; *ebhiḥ prakṛtijaiḥ tribhirguṇaiḥ muktam syāt,* which is 'free from or devoid of the three *guṇas* born of *Prakṛti*'. Such is the manifestation of the

primordial reality manipulated by the three *guṇas*. Everything that is manifest is subject to the three *guṇas*. When you go beyond the three *guṇas,* you go to the original state of the Atman.

A very wonderful state in modern astronomy and astro-physics is the state of singularity. Today the world is a multiplicity. And at one time it was a singularity. From the One, the many has come. The state of the One is where the manipulation of the *guṇas* do not exist. But once they begin to manifest, in the diversity of the world, the *guṇas* begin to play their part. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that everything is subject to the three *guṇas*. The various energies that were there during the pre-cosmic period, were in an absolutely unified state. Then came a slight disturbance within. Out of that came all this differentiation. And this differentiation is going on step by step. That is why in a wonderful book on physics it is discussed what happened after the Big Bang—the first part of a second, the next part of a second, etc. None of these things that we find here now existed then. Everything was pure energy. Not even atoms or molecules were there. Some energy was there. Then slowly differentiation set in. That is what we study in the principle of entropy, energy diffusion. It will return to that same original state later on—energy being reduced to its primary aspect. So, Vedanta talks of *samkoca* or contraction, and *vikāsa* or expansion. The world in its original state is in a unified condition, i.e. in *samkoca*—a state of singularity. Then comes *vikāsa*, expansion—Big Bang—and that expansion continues even now. That is called cosmic evolution. Then, a return journey called involution takes place. That is called *samkoca*, contraction, and multiplicity goes back to singularity. In an earlier chapter Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said the same thing: From *avyakta* has come the *vyakta,* and *vyakta* goes back to *avyakta.* This takes place again and again. This is the teaching we find in the *Gītā.* Now Śrī Kṛṣṇa takes us to other subjects where human spiritual life is taken to higher and higher levels of expression. And the last note in the music of the *Gītā* will be sung a few verses later: complete surrender to the Divine. From Him the universe has come, we all live in Him, and to Him we return. We don't know this truth, but when we know this truth, we will learn to say, 'Not I, but You'. 'Your will be done.' That is called the *carama śloka,* or the 'last supreme verse', or 'the end verse' in the *Gītā.* There we will get a high crescendo of the *Gītā*-message. Beginning with self-effort in the first

few chapters, passing through various stages of human development, the last song of the *Gītā* will be 'Nothing is mine; Thou art everything.'

The *guṇa* treatment is meant to tell us that one can manipulate these *guṇas* by conducting one's life intelligently. One need not be caught up in the *guṇas* all the time. We are caught up, but we can also free ourself. This knowledge, that I have now a *tāmasik* attitude of mind, also helps me to convert it into the *rājasik* attitude. The knowledge that I have a *rājasik* attitude helps me to rise to the *sāttvik* attitude of mind. This capacity to go from one *guṇa* to another is within us because we are essentially the Atman which is above these *guṇas.* Only, we do not know that truth now. We are drawing upon that truth to deal with life in the three *guṇas*. So, this knowledge of the three *guṇas* and their operation is helpful in developing character.

Take, for example, hatred, violence and all such things. All these things come from a mixture of *rajas* and *tamas.* Society today is full of these. Why should *I* be like that? That questioning must come. I need not be subject to all these. I can change the situation. What a beautiful idea! Who will change it?, I myself. Nature cannot change us. The earth or heaven cannot change us. We can change ourself. Let us keep this knowledge with us and change ourself. We are free to be fully *tāmasik* with all pettiness, with all irksome attitudes, scattering peacelessness everywhere. Many people do that. But, why should one do that? That questioning must come. Then a change comes. Even the most wicked man or woman can become a really good person. That change is possible. But effort is needed. Understanding is needed. Then slowly the ratio of forces changes within the human system. *Tamas* may remain a little; *rajas* also may remain. But a touch of *sattva* comes and the whole thing changes. Even in family life, between husband and wife, if too much of *rajas* and *tamas* are there in them, there will be very little peace and understanding. A touch of *sattva* can bring about great changes in inter-human relations in the most intimate field of life, namely, the family. Instead, we indulge in quarrelling, fighting, and speaking in such a way as to taunt the other individual to bring out the worst from him or her. And we bring about suffering all around. Then we go to some magician to perform some magic on us. Why should we go to a magician when the magic is in our own hands? We can change the ratio of forces within us; we

did not know the truth and now we know it. Vedanta tells everyone that one is one's own master, if only one knows how to go about it.

Earlier we spoke about the will. That will can be made pure and socially oriented. How can I make my will the instrument of somebody else's happiness? The moment I think on these lines, my will gets transformed. Now I use it only for my own happiness. All others must work for *my* happiness. I am at the centre, just as the sun is the centre for all planets. All must spin around me like so many planets and work for my happiness. But a concern for others is essential. Then, slowly *sattva* begins to appear in the human mind. The spirit of service is a wonderful idea. By that these psychic energies are refined and purified. They become socially oriented. And that is the product called character. A person of character will only scatter peace, happiness and welfare all around. This is a possibility for every person. Even the worst person can improve like this by oneself becoming one's own educator in this field. Others may give suggestions and hints. But the work of refinement has to be done by oneself. So, none need feel that he or she is down and out. If we think that we are down and out, then so we are. If we think otherwise, we can also get out of it. We should have faith in ourself. *Śraddhā, ātmaśraddhā* should be there; 'I can, I can', that attitude. I can conquer this situation. Putting the responsibility on our own self is the great contribution of Vedanta. We can bring ourself down; we can also raise ourself up by changing our mind and attitude, which also means changing the ratio of the three forces—*sattva, rajas,* and *tamas,* within ourself.

Swami Vivekananda said: 'Renunciation and Service are the twin ideals of India.' These are the twin great ideals. If India goes in that line, everybody and everything will be alright. The little 'I' should be renounced by finding a place for other individuals around us. Not only 'I' but also 'you'; keep 'you' also in the picture. A little renunciation of 'I' is needed to find some place for 'you'. Quite naturally, if I want to find a place for 'you', I will have to reduce the place for myself. So, when we find place for somebody else, we practise renunciation. Then the spirit of service becomes natural, spontaneous and automatic. So, a concern for others is essential for all human development. If that is not there, we get a *rākṣasa* or demoniac nature, destroying the happiness of people, destroying ourself, and making for a tragic life. That should not be. This line of development is open to all

of us. So, *let there be a search for the human energy system and its refinement*. That is all what is to be understood as religion and also as education: changing this mind from one going down to one going up. Gravitational pull of the lower nature, the genetic nature, the biological nature is very strong, and the mind goes down. Now, another force pulls up the mind little by little. So, 'raise yourself by yourself' as Śrī Kṛṣṇa said in the sixth chapter (verse 5): *uddharet ātmanā ātmānam.* What a wonderful expression! To children we can say, 'I can help you. I can even raise you once. But I cannot always be carrying you on my shoulders. You have to stand on your own feet. Raise yourself by yourself.' This teaching must go to children. A sense of responsibility will come to them. This is why the *Gītā* has spent some time to deal with these constituent forces of *Prakṛti* which are there in everything in this world, including you and me. They are in nature also; but nature cannot handle them, whereas we can handle them. There is a focus of freedom in the human being. It is not there in the animal or in the plant. It is there in men and women, and so we can handle these forces utilising that freedom to change the ratio of these forces and make for the refining of the energy system. This is a simple teaching meant for all. It has nothing to do with a creed or dogma or any such thing. Whether we are in Russia or America or India or Africa does not make any difference. Wherever we are, being a human being we carry these resources within us. The handling of these forces has to be done by ourself. We have natural resources, and we process them through our technology to make for better human life in economic terms. So also in character. There are resources; they are raw energy; we process them, refine them to make for beautiful character products. That is the conclusion of the discussion on the three *guṇas.* The discussion started practically from the thirteenth chapter, and coming through the subsequent chapters, the conclusion of that discussion is brought about in this verse 40 of the eighteenth chapter.

Now we enter into some of the most beautiful ideas, philosophical and spiritual. The first statement is about man or woman capable of achieving spiritual perfection according to the situation in which one finds oneself to be. One need not change the situation. If one is in a particular situation, even in that situation one can realize the highest truth. Changing the situation does not mean that we are going to realize the truth better. But

when we accept the situation, it satisfies our psychological temperament, our psychological nature; then, if we continue in it, we will achieve the highest even through that. This is a very profound teaching which is coming to us in a language which may contain many very unsatisfactory factors. But when we analyse them, they are perfectly simple.

ब्राह्मणक्षत्रियविशां शूद्राणां च परन्तप।
कर्माणि प्रविभक्तानि स्वभावप्रभवैर्गुणैः॥४१॥

Brāhmaṇa kṣatriya viśām śūdrāṇām ca parantapa;
Karmāṇi pravibhaktāni svabhāva prabhavaiḥ guṇaiḥ—18. 41

'Of *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas*, as also of *śūdras*, O scorcher of foes, the duties are distributed according to the *guṇas* born of their own nature.'

In all societies, we find people pursuing various occupations 'impelled by their own psychological nature or temperament', *svabhāva prabhavaiḥ guṇaiḥ*; *guṇas* coming from their *svabhāva. Svabhāva* means 'one's own nature'. We have got a fund of psychic energy in us. That will incline us to a particular work and a particular mode of life. And we are free to follow it. That is our method. Any work that satisfies our aspirations, our temperament, that we should do; that is the natural state of a person.

And so, to express this idea we use the terms *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya,* and *śūdra.* When we hear these terms in India today, we always think of the caste system. But this has nothing to do with the caste system. In fact, the original caste system was based on this concept: everyone working according to his or her own inclination to express oneself through work. If I am put in a wrong work, I cannot express my feeling best in that work. If it is in my own line, then I can do it better. So, everybody chose what was suitable to self-expression. That was called one's *dharma.* Somebody else's *dharma* may be different. So, four classifications were made by our great thinkers. Every society has this fourfold classifications or types. People who are calm, silent, inward, compassionate, devoted to knowledge and higher spiritual experiences are of the *brāhmaṇa* type, as I have elaborately discussed earlier in the *Introduction* in the first volume.

That is a type. In every country you find people of that type. Next comes the *kṣatriya* who is full of energy, full of forward thrust, heroic qualities, and certain other qualities. The third is the *vaiśya* who deals with agriculture, industry, and who makes money and spends that money for various good purposes. And the fourth is the *śūdra* who will do the work, give one's labour. He or she does not have much of education or higher understanding, but such a person is prepared to work hard. That type is also there in every society.

All over the world we have people belonging to these four categories. Every family will have one or two or more of these categories. So, that society is the best which gives free expression to these innate tendencies in the work that is allotted to the people. In our society, this was very much spoiled during the last two thousand years. We were asked to stay in one particular type: 'don't do anything else; that is your own type'—a genetically determined status in life. That status was one not determined by our attitude and inclination, but determined by birth. So, we in India had thwarted human aspirations. We had arrested human development in India by putting this genetic interpretation on the concept of *varṇa. Varṇa* was usually understood as occupation in those days. There are so many occupations such as carpentry, business, etc. The father took to one of these occupations, but the son said that he would start an industry. Another son would say that he would go to the army. Yet another may do something else or even become a monk and be somewhere, say, in holy Rishikesh. Everybody was free. That was the nature of *varṇa* in the original sense. Many Western thinkers have said that, in this original formulation, the essential meaning of this occupation or *varṇa* is the freedom to occupy oneself with a particular job. The degeneration of it by making birth as the criteria has been tremendous. It has spoilt human aspirations. We are trying to get out of it now in India in the modern period. Today's genetically decided caste will not exist hereafter. It is gone; its back is broken. But still the conception of *varṇa* will remain. Every country will have people whose aspirations will take them to a particular occupation. We may find a boy in some house only sitting in meditation, going to worship, reading books, but not interested in any money-making and business. Such cases are there. We may try to hammer anything else into his head; nothing of it will enter

there. His own *samskāra* is different. So also, another is making money. I have seen a boy who made money by lending money to his own mother. Very quickly he made money. That was his nature. So also there are others who go to military service. Some say, I will become a policeman. That is *his* nature, and he shines there, because a job in which we can express our personality is the right job for us. We should not feel like a square peg in a round hole. But if the society is good enough, we can change the job. But change for change's sake should not be. Change we may, to get a job finally which will respect our personality. Once we get it, we should constantly go into it, make the best out of it. We have to work out our salvation in the context of that job. That is the language Śrī Kṛṣṇa has used here in this and in the next verses.

The next verse will say that through that work he or she will achieve the highest personality development and spiritual perfection. What are these various qualities that send us to various types of occupations? That is the topic of the next few verses.

शमो दमस्तपः शौचं क्षान्तिरार्जवमेव च।
ज्ञानं विज्ञानमास्तिक्यं ब्रह्मकर्म स्वभावजम्॥४२॥

Śamo damastapaḥ śaucam kṣāntirārjavam eva ca;
Jñānam vijñānam āstikyam brahmakarma svabhāvajam—18. 42

'The control of the mind and the senses, austerity, purity, forbearance, and also uprightness, knowledge, realization, belief in a hereafter—these are the ways of the *brāhmaṇas*, born of (their own) nature.'

This describes the *brāhmaṇa* type. *Śamo damastapaḥ śaucam kṣāntirārjavam eva ca,* these are the qualities that make for the *brāhmaṇa* type. What are these qualities? *Śamaḥ* or 'control of the mind'; *damaḥ* or 'control of the sense organs'; the sensory apparatus is under control. They cannot go here and there. That means that he or she is not dictated by the senses. Then, *tapaḥ* or 'austerity'. Next, *śaucam* or 'purity' of life, physical and mental. *Kṣāntiḥ* or forbearance; somebody does him or her some harm, but he or she does not mind. He or she is not going to fight back. It is a high quality. Only in an evolved person can one get that quality. Somebody

comes and bangs you, and you retort immediately—that is the *kṣatriya* type, not the *brāhmaṇa* type. *Brāhmaṇa* can bear a good deal. Just see the beauty of that quality. They have achieved that good virtue: bear and forbear. You bear when others make you suffer, and you don't make others suffer because of you. That is the quality that makes for the *brāhmaṇa* type. *Árjavam* is another wonderful quality; it means 'straightforwardness'. There is no diplomacy whatsoever. The *brāhmaṇa* is of that type. Diplomacy is wanted only when you come down and further down, and go in for money-making and power handling. Then you need a lot of diplomacy. At the stage of a *brāhmaṇa* there is no need for diplomacy at all. *Ìju* means 'straight', and the opposite is *kuṭila* or 'crooked'. A political mind is usually a crooked mind, at least a little bit.

Similarly, *jñānam* or 'knowledge'. Seeking knowledge to know what is the truth of a thing. A child gets a mango and immediately he or she will start biting it. Another child gets a mango, and he or she will study to know what type of mango it is. 'I want to know what this is; before I eat, I want to know'. Knowledge is first. Then *vijñānam* or 'experiencing the truth of that knowledge'. *Ástikyam* means a tremendous conviction that there is a meaning for this human life. That conviction is called *āstikyam*. One may find this world and human life without any meaning and thus become a cynic; but a *brāhmaṇa* can never become a cynic. He or she knows that there is a truth behind this universe and human life and that he or she is in search of it. *Ástikyam* means *asti iti* attitude, the attitude of 'there *is*' a truth behind all this. One may not have seen that truth now; but one can and will see it in due course. It is just like going to a tank for fishing for the first time. First, we have the conviction that there is fish in this tank. Otherwise, we would not have gone there at all. Suppose we knew in advance that there is no fish in that tank, would we go to fish there? So, as *āstikya* is needed in fishing, so also in life that attitude is needed—there is a truth behind this universe, and I want to know it. I have not known it yet, but it is there; that attitude is called *āstikya.* 'A totality of positive attitudes' is the meaning of *śraddhā* in Sanskrit. Śaṅkarācārya defined *śraddhā* in his *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* commentary as *āstikya buddhi*—'mind attuned to a positive attitude'. That is called *śraddhā,* 'faith in oneself and in the meaning of the universe'. It is a wonderful quality of human life. All other positive attitudes come from

that primary attitude. If we begin our life with the attitude 'everything is meaningless', then our life will be an entire negation. 'A person with *śraddhā* alone can achieve knowledge', said the *Gītā* in an earlier chapter, *śraddhāvān labhate jñānam.* Today we have to understand this truth.

So, the *brāhmaṇa* has these virtues: control of the mind, control of the senses, austerity, purity, forbearance, and uprightness. Then, he or she has knowledge and experience or realization. This is the line of work with which a *brāhmaṇa* is concerned. That person has a *brāhmaṇa* quality. His or her work is cut out, and in that work alone such a person can shine. If he or she goes in for money-making, he or she will make a poor show there, being unfit for it. Every society has people of this nature. I have seen it. I have travelled all over the world. I have seen very young persons eager for this kind of life and saying to oneself: 'I want this kind of life; that is my temperament.'

Next is the *kṣatriya.* See the quality! Not because one is born of a *kṣatriya* father does one become a *kṣatriya.* Your quality must be of a *kṣatriya.* How many children of a *kṣatriya* ruler are truly *kṣatriyas*? The quality is very important and it can come from any family background. Though one is born in a very poor backward family, one may yet be able to show *kṣatriya* quality. That truth we neglected in India. We wanted that *kṣatriya*-ship must come only from a *kṣatriya* family. So, we got so many indifferent, useless *kṣatriyas* also. One king happens to be a great king, but his son happens to be a fool number one, and the whole state collapses. How many times it has happened in our history! A *kṣatriya's* son cannot always be a *kṣatriya;* he may be far below par. That is possible. So, this idea is good. Select one who has the desired quality. What is the quality of a *kṣatriya*? A beautiful description is given in following verse. I feel that our India needs lot of *kṣatriyas* today—*kṣatriyas* of the *Gītā* type. What are those qualities?

शौर्यं तेजो धृतिर्दाक्ष्यं युद्धे चाप्यपलायनम्।
दानमीश्वरभावश्च क्षत्रकर्म स्वभावजम्॥४३॥

Śauryam tejo dhṛtiḥ dākṣyam yuddhe ca api apalāyanam;
Dānam īśvarabhāvaśca kṣatrakarma svabhāvajam — 18. 43

‘Prowess, boldness, fortitude, capability, and also not flying away from battle, generosity and sovereignty are the qualities of the *Kṣatriya* type, born of (their own) nature.’

Śauryam, ‘courage’ or ‘prowess’; *tejo,* ‘tremendous energy’; a *kṣatriya* is one who is full of energy and very bold. *Dhṛtiḥ,* ‘a strong will’; *dākṣyam,* ‘a tremendous capacity’; *yuddhe ca api apalāyanam,* ‘not running away from battle’. That is the meaning of a *kṣatriya*—one who faces the battle. How many times have we read in our history this description: a *kṣatriya* with a wound on his breast is a true *kṣatriya.* With a wound on the back, he is not a *kṣatriya,* because he was running away from battle. What an amount of courage there must be. Everybody does not get that kind of courage. Every *kṣatriya’s* child does not get it. We come across Uttarakumara in our *Mahābhārata* who was frightened and ran away. Plenty of such people are there in our country taking to politics or some other kind of profession for which they are not fit. The qualities mentioned as belonging to a *kṣatriya* are very much needed in public life today. If there is a problem before us, we should not run away from it. It is not merely facing a battle; facing a problem is also the same. We should have the capacity to control the problem by our energy. Then we have the *kṣatriya* spirit. Running away from the problem is certainly not a *kṣatriya* quality.

Then, *dānam,* ‘ever ready to give’—an extended hand ever ready to help people in distress. That is a wonderful quality of a *kṣatriya.* If people around him are in distress, he is there to help them. And the other quality is *īśvarabhāvaḥ,* ‘a sense of power’; the feeling that ‘I have tremendous power within me.’ I am not a mean, little fellow. One may have plenty of money, and yet he or she can be very mean. But a *kṣatriya* is not at all mean. There is always that spirit of generosity. When he or she gives, he or she gives with a fullness of heart. Swami Vivekananda saw in Rajasthan the *kṣatriya* spirit which we find mentioned here. At one time our *kṣatriyas* had this wonderful spirit. *Kṣatrakarma svabhāvajam,* these are the ‘activities of the *kṣatriya* coming from his or her own nature’.

These are the various attitudes, and I wish all our children develop this *kṣatriya* attitude: strength, courage, facing problems, and not fleeing because something bad might happen. Swami Vivekananda calls it

manliness—not in the gender sense, but from the sense of the strength that is involved in that word. Men or women must develop this quality of strength. Weakness is no virtue. We have been thinking that weakness and fear are virtues in women. It is absolutely wrong. *Abalā* or 'the weak' is the word for women! In a feudal society women are weak, they are made weak, and they have been told to be weak. So, they become weak and we use the word *abalā.* But this is not correct. In any society we can have courageous women, not one but in hundreds and thousands. That is the India of the future. This word *abalā* will have no place there. When the Upaniṣads will inspire our humanity in India, we shall develop these qualities in large numbers of people, because the central teaching of Vedanta is the innate divinity of every human being. We have only to unfold and manifest it. But, by discrimination based on genetic conditions, we have ruined our people, arrested their development all these centuries. Today we are removing that constraint. Let people grow to the fullest extent and manifest whatever possibilities there are in them. What an amount of social prejudice we had which suppressed many capable people! They could not rise higher at all. I was born a sweeper, and I will have to die a sweeper! I can't become anything better, though I have the capacity; society tells me, 'remain there, remain there.' Not only does the society say so, Swami Vivekananda says, the *brāhmaṇa* power made an agreement with the *kṣatriya* power to keep all others down. That was the ruin of India. So, the power of the political state yielded to the power of the priestly class, and kept millions of people down. That is our past history for the last two thousand years.

Now these past events are indicative of a type of mind which never allowed millions of people to rise to their highest level. That is the darker side of our social history. Our philosophical-cultural history is very good; but our social history has many such dark patches. There is no use in criticizing the past. The only thing we have to do in this age is to get rid of this foolish discrimination and bring about a healthy development of all human beings. That is what we are doing today. And our national leaders who came in this modern period have this attitude. Swami Vivekananda was outspoken on this question—development of every human being according to whatever energies are provided within the human system. Develop such a society, work for it. Don't allow anybody to accept special

privileges. Swami Vivekananda said: 'when privileges raise their heads, knock them on their heads.' So, in one lecture delivered in England entitled 'Vedanta and Privilege', Swami Vivekananda said, 'No privileges'; you have your own equipment, your own capacities. Try to express them. 'But do not claim special privilege for yourself.' That is why an awakened citizenship must be there to see that privileges do not raise their heads; and if they do, knock on their heads again and again. We have to have that kind of India now. We missed it for more than two thousand years. That is the importance of this modern chapter of Indian history—a glorious chapter. Philosophically and spiritually we have nothing new to achieve. We have got everything there. But the society we formed is full of antihuman attitudes. Remove that, and a good society will come. It must be consciously and deliberately attempted by our people today. That is why in our education we must get an insight into this subject. What is the type of men and women we bring out of this country by this modern education? That will give us an insight into the deeper understanding of the four classes of human beings: how they can be helped to bring out the best possible character, how anything thwarting this in the form of special privileges will be thwarted by awakened public opinion. This is the importance of dealing with this particular subject today. It is a simple verse. We had it earlier in the fourth chapter also. But whenever we hear the words *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya,* and *śudra,* we only think of the current caste system. Remove that association with the caste system. It is human types that are being emphasized. Let us have it, but let us remove this bad element of privilege from it. What is poison in it is that special privilege. That is what is being removed in the modern age, and we have to be alert in that direction.

We discussed the first two: the *brāhmaṇa* and the *kṣatriya.* These alone cannot run a society. Productive activity is a big social unit. Agricultural production, industrial production, and also commerce, sending and receiving goods and services to and from different places—all these are the activities of the *vaiśya.*

कृषिगौरक्ष्यवाणिज्यं वैश्यकर्म स्वभावजम्।
परिचर्यात्मकं कर्मशूद्रस्यापि स्वभावजम्॥४४॥

Kṛṣigaurakṣya vāṇijyam vaiśyakarma svabhāvajam;
Paricaryātmakam karma śūdrasyāpi svabhāvajam — 18. 44

'Agriculture, cattle-rearing, and trade are the duties of the *vaiśyas*, born of (their own) nature; and action consisting of service is the duty of the *śūdras*, born of (their own) nature.'

When a man or a woman is of the temperament of making money through agriculture, industry, business, etc., he or she is in the type of the *vaiśya.* And that is the way he or she will express himself or herself. What are these activities? *Kṛṣi* or 'agriculture'; then, *gorakṣa* or 'protection of cattle', rearing cattle; *vāṇijyam* or 'business' or commerce or commodity exchanges. In fact, the whole of modern civilization began as a *vaiśya* civilization. East India Company started the modern period in Europe as well as in India. Their aim was mere business, and they spread all over the world. And today, this international *vaiśya* type is so prominent everywhere. We have to deal with it because it is needed for human development. So, it is not against human welfare but is for human welfare, and thus the *vaiśya* has a great place in society.

Lastly comes the *śudra* or the worker—in the modern context one who is called the proletariat. He or she does not have many other capacities, but can work hard. Their attitude is: 'I will get my food, shelter, clothing and everything, and in return I will work.' There are people of that kind also everywhere. Even in America, one gets plenty of people belonging to this type. *Paricaryātmakam karma,* 'work in the form of services'; I am prepared to offer my services—that attitude. That does not mean I am a slave. I shall work; only, give me the respect due to me. That is a beautiful idea. I give you my labour; you give me your money. I live my life according to that. But respect must be there whatever be the work one does. The term *śudra* had a bad odour in our erstwhile Indian society. That bad odour will go and must go. I have seen that in foreign countries where working people are treated with respect and dignity. They don't crouch before anybody. That is a *śudra,* and not those who pass off as *śudra* in our society—a low class person. And he or she also has lost faith in oneself. Now, that kind of a person must go. The new dignified type must come who will say, 'Look! I have plenty of energy. I can work. I can do this or that.

Please utilize my services; for society needs it.' That type of a person is the new *śudra.*

In India, a number of people will be of the *śudra* type in future doing some labour. Labour is essential in a society. But we won't treat labourers as something low. They have a high status. In fact, we are going to make them managers of industry hereafter. So, that kind of labourers who have developed this kind of capacity will remain labourers, but they will have greater respect in society. They will have self-respect and social respect. That type of change will come in modern India. And this has come through the touch of India with Western culture. Before that it was not there. Without Western interference we would not have even thought about these things to this extent. We must thank them for that. They have given us a new outlook. Treat human beings as human, not as someone below par. That looking down will be completely abolished.

These are the four types. We have them in Russia, in America, in China, in India, in Europe, and also everywhere else. The only difference is that in the modern period the West developed this capacity to respect every human being and every occupation. That is why they became more democratic. We took longer time to achieve that sense of democracy. Only now have we got it. We never had it earlier. And yet this is the way of human development. Everybody has his or her own status, and we should recognize it. That is the individual worth and dignity. Not what we do, but what we are ourself. Work does not by itself give status to a person; he or she has an initial status; that is an unalterable status as a human being. Other things come and go, but the status as a human being always remains. We call it in our democratic language as: the citizen is the universal status of everyone in India. May be he or she is a leader, an administrator, or a mere worker. As a citizen his or her status is supreme. Though highly respected, he or she may be doing only ordinary service like sweeping. What does it matter? He or she is a citizen all the same, but engaged in sweeping. You may be a citizen doing some government work in the Secretariat. The citizenship status is the common status. This is the contribution of the modern socio-political theory of democracy. We will develop a democratic society in India—not only a political democracy, but also a social democracy. That is the challenge before us. And the *Gītā* will help us in meeting this challenge.

Gītā will not allow you to discriminate between one person and another. In fact, the next verse deals with this subject from another angle.

By occupation one may be a sweeper. Can this occupation help that person to develop himself or herself? One who is a sweeper in society can also become a Prime Minister, if he or she has the capacity. Whatever occupation one takes up, one can develop one's own personality, one's own inner life, and attain one's own spiritual fulfilment from that very occupation. That is the theme of the next verse, a very important verse.

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरत: संसिद्धिं लभते नर:।
स्वकर्मनिरत: सिद्धिं यथा विन्दति तच्छृणु॥४५॥

Sve sve karmaṇi abhirataḥ samsiddhim labhate naraḥ;
Svakarmaniratah siddhim yathā vindati tacchṛṇu —18. 45

'Devoted each to his or her own duty, a person attains the highest perfection; engaged in one's own duty, how a person attains perfection, hear that (from Me).'

Sve sve karmaṇi abhirataḥ, 'engaged with all enthusiasm in one's own occupation'; *sve sve karmaṇi* means 'in one's own occupation'; *abhirataḥ,* 'delighted' in that occupation. How does one attain spiritual perfection? I will tell you that, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *Samsiddhim labhate naraḥ,* 'a person attains spiritual perfection' by engaging in *any* occupation. Through that very occupation one can achieve great heights. That is the statement. What a great blessing this is to everyone! If, without changing one's occupation one cannot get spiritual perfection, most people won't be able to achieve spirituality. Any occupation that you have, make that the venue for your own inner development. If you have the capacity, and if you struggle devotedly, you can go to the highest. *Svakarmaniratah siddhim yathā vindati tacchṛṇu,* 'listen to Me how, by engaging oneself in one's own occupation, one attains perfection.' You adopt your own occupation according to your own psychological disposition. This will help you to express yourself in your work. That is the first conclusion. By this work you can also achieve your spiritual development. That is a wonderful new idea —that a work can make you achieve spiritual development. Yes, it can;

there is no need for a change of occupation. That is the second conclusion. And so, the next verse which has wide ramifications in society explains how.

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम्।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः॥४६॥

Yataḥ pravṛttiḥ bhūtānām yena sarvam idam tatam;
Svakarmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhim vindati mānavaḥ—18. 46

'From whom is the evolution of all beings, by whom all this is pervaded, worshipping Him with one's own work, a person attains perfection.'

'From whom this universe has come', *yataḥ pravṛttiḥ bhūtānām;* the whole universe of beings has come from that supreme Brahman. *Yena sarvam idam tatam,* 'by whom everything in this manifested universe is pervaded'; the cause pervades the effect. If the world has come from Brahman, the world is pervaded by that very Brahman. See the language. *Yataḥ pravṛttiḥ bhūtānām; pravṛttiḥ* means 'the cosmic process'; the entire manifestation of the universe has come from that ultimate Reality. *Yataḥ* means 'from where', meaning thereby that supreme Brahman. And 'that Brahman is there in every particle in this universe', *yena sarvam idam tatam.* What is the nature of that Brahman? It is of the nature of pure Consciousness, infinite and non-dual. That is not a lump of matter, but that is infinite Consciousness or *Cit svarūpa*. Brahman is defined in the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* as *satyam jñānam anantam,* 'truth, consciousness, and infinitude'. That Brahman has projected this universe. You and I have come from That. And that Brahman is there in every particle in this universe, in you, in me, and also in the world outside. If that is so, then Brahman is not far away for us. It is nearest to me and to you. *Svakarmaṇā tam abhyarcya,* 'through one's work worshipping that Brahman', to remember Him and to realize Him. You worship Him through your work. What a beautiful idea! *Siddhim vindati mānavaḥ,* 'a person attains *siddhi* or spiritual perfection' by this orientation of all work in that direction. What a beautiful message for every worker in this world! The humblest of occupations and big social occupations have no difference as far as spiritual value is concerned. Each

one of them can take you straight to the highest spiritual development. This is the supremely redemptive message of the *Gītā.* We of this country have rarely understood it. But in the modern period we hear and follow this teaching, and people elsewhere also will hear and follow this teaching and then realize the solidarity of spiritual life. It is not meant for any select people. It is everybody's birthright to be spiritual because that infinite spiritual Reality is in you and in me. It is there in life itself on earth. How should one approach Him?, through one's own occupation. You need not take to someone else's occupation. *Your own occupation becomes the meeting ground of the human and the divine. That is the great teaching of the Gītā.* Any one can attain spiritual perfection through that orientation of occupation into the spiritual dimension.

This has a profound relevance to everyone today. Specially, in our secular philosophy of daily life. We can make our occupation too secular and devoid of any spiritual value; that we are trying to do now; and we find that it is very bad for human beings. How to put a little value into this wonderful idea of occupation? That striving is going on. Therefore, this particular reference in the *Gītā* has got wide relevance in human society today. This wide relevance of the *Gītā* is the conversion of all work into a means for higher spiritual development; your occupation gives you what they say in Hindi, *roṭi* or bread, *kapḍā* or clothes, and *makān* or dwelling place. Very good; but your occupation can also give you something more. Let people enquire to know what is that more? And when they will come to know this truth that it leads to human fulfilment also, then they will appreciate this *Gītā* teaching all the more.

The concept of work, of human development and fulfilment, is what affects everyone in the world. It is a universal theme, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa has just given us an indication in this verse—how this work is related to the highest Reality or to God in the heart of all human beings and in nature. Then that work will get tremendous strength, tremendous power to elevate the worker to the highest level.

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुण: परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात्।
स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम्॥४७॥

Śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt;
Svabhāvaniyatam karma kurvan na āpnoti kilbiṣam—18. 47

'Better is one's own *dharma,* (though) imperfect, than the *dharma* of another well performed. One who does the duty ordained by one's own nature incurs no evil.'

This is my *dharma,* but I am not doing it so perfectly. I am doing somebody else's *dharma* perfectly. That is not correct. The word *svadharma* has come earlier and we had discussed it. It is: whatever we do 'dictated by our own inner disposition', *svabhāva niyatam.* What we really are is dictating the work that we do. That means our soul is finding expression in our work. That work is a soulful work. We should stay in it, though the work of some other person may seem better and more attractive. We should never give up our *dharma* and follow that of another. We must express our own soul in our work. May be it is not done so finely as we may do somebody else's work. Still we should not leave it and run after something else. *Svabhāva niyatam karma kurvan,* 'doing actions dictated by one's own nature'; *na āpnoti kilbiṣam,* 'he or she does not incur any evil.' To follow somebody else's *dharma* is not good; it is poisonous. And this shifting from the *dharma* of one to that of another is an endless process. We go on changing, with no faith in oneself, with no faith in one's own *svabhāva.* That is really bad. We have a saying in our society: a cow is grazing and looks across the river and finds more grass on the other side. She keeps telling, 'I will go there and graze. "Here" it is not good, "there" it is better'; and the cow will not graze at all. Wherever we are, we have to first graze there. Similarly, the human mind loses faith in itself, in its own field of work, and runs after the work of some other people. Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said earlier, *paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ,* 'the *dharma* of another is harmful'. Have faith in one's own *dharma.* Therefore, it is better to perform that action which is dictated by one's own *svabhāva,* than some other type of action. That is the guidance given to the human mind, and it is needed because the human mind is very fickle. Therefore, it is better to first determine one's own *svabhāva*. How can I express my soul in a particular field of work? If you get it, all the better. *That society is the best where everyone can get the work dictated by his or her own svabhāva.* It is only in a very developed society that we can get such a work. In our society today

we cannot get exactly what is dictated by one's own nature. We have to be content with some other type of work. That shows we are undeveloped in every way. Therefore, at this stage we have to achieve a measure of satisfaction even by being a little away from one's own *svabhāva*. But further stages will come when society develops. Then we can get our own soulful work near about us. We need not run about here and there. That comes from highly developed situations in a society. Next, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives one more touch to this teaching.

सहजं कर्म कौन्तेय सदोषमपि न त्यजेत्।
सर्वारम्भा हि दोषेण धूमेनाग्निरिवावृता:॥४८॥

Sahajam karma kaunteya sadoṣam api na tyajet;
Sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmena agniḥ iva āvṛtāḥ — 18. 48

'One should not relinquish, O son of Kuntī, the duty to which one is born, though it is attended with evil; for all undertakings are certainly enveloped by some evil, as fire by smoke.'

What a simple language! So precise is the meaning! *Sahajam* or *saha ja* means 'born with oneself'; the *karma* that is born with us is *sahajam karma;* actually it means spontaneous, natural work. The action that is dictated by one's own nature is *sahajam karma; kaunteya,* 'O Arjuna'; such work *sadoṣam api,* 'even though there may be some defect in it'; *na tyajet,* 'don't give it up.' Why?, because 'every *karma* is enveloped by some defect or the other', *sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa āvṛtāḥ*. No work is absolutely free from defect. This is a great statement. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives an example: *dhūmena agniḥ iva,* 'just as fire is surrounded by smoke'—some fire is there, and some smoke is also there. When we light a fire, some smoke is found to be associated with it. There is no perfect work. In this imperfect world, there is nothing perfect. The only thing perfect is the infinite One. One has to realize this truth. We have to discover the Perfect in and through the imperfect. That is something very wonderful. Even though this body is imperfect, with the help of it we are achieving the perfect Self. The finite helps us to achieve the Infinite. A time-bound instrument helping us to achieve the timeless and the immortal. What a great intelligence it is! In the *Mahābhārata* there is that verse:

Eṣā buddhimatām buddhiḥ manīṣā ca manīṣiṇām
Yat satyam anṛteneha martyenāpnoti mām amṛtam —

The Lord is saying that 'a human being is extremely clever if he or she can achieve Me, the immortal and the infinite, through mortal and finite instruments like the body, the mind, and the senses.'

Eṣā buddhimatām buddhiḥ, 'this is the real *buddhimatā* of the *buddhimān,* the real intelligence of the intelligent people'; *manīṣā ca manīṣiṇām,* 'the wisdom of the wise people'; *martyena,* 'by this mortal body and other instruments', they realize the Lord who is infinite and immortal and true. How can one do it? It is seen that they are achieving it. So, that is the type of intelligence which it emphasizes. *Martyena,* 'through the mortal'; *anṛtena,* 'through the unreal'*; āpnoti*, 'attains'; *yat satyam,* 'that which is True'; *mām amṛtam,* 'Me, the immortal'. The body is *asatya, anṛta, anitya.* Yet we realize the imperishable, the immortal, the infinite through this body.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that however careful one may be, when one lives in a room covered with soot, a little soot will stick to oneself. Therefore, let us not expect to be absolutely perfect in this world of work. There is always some imperfection sticking to everyone. Let us not mind it; let us reduce it to the minimum. That is all what we can do because the world is imperfect. So, regarding work Śrī Kṛṣṇa is saying here that work is imperfect, but through this imperfect work, and through this imperfect body, we are going to realize the perfect One, our own infinite nature. Now, let us develop a correct attitude towards work. We are working in various fields; we have to maintain our physical existence through work; we have also to get a boost towards our own higher life through that work. That is the greatest advantage *Gītā* gives everyone.

असक्तबुद्धिः सर्वत्र जितात्मा विगतस्पृहः।
नैष्कर्म्यसिद्धिं परमां संन्यासेनाधिगच्छति॥४९॥

Asaktabuddhiḥ sarvatra jitātmā vigataspṛhaḥ;
Naiṣkarmya siddhim paramām sannyāsena adhigacchati—18. 49

‘One whose intellect is unattached everywhere, who has subdued one’s self, whose desires have fled, he or she attains, by renunciation, to the supreme perfection consisting of freedom from action.’

This attitude of mind, i.e. *askata buddhiḥ*, which means ‘a detached intellect’; the intellect is functioning, but it is detached. To that extent it is calm. Attachment makes for a little excitement, but detachment makes for calmness. *Sarvatra,* ‘in all fields of life’, the *buddhi* has been evolved with a spirit of detachment. So, it can take any amount of responsibility without feeling the weight of it. Carry a weight without feeling that you have a weight! That is what *asakta buddhi* means. We *do* carry a weight. I have seen people with very little responsibility swearing all the time, getting excited all the time. And there are also some people with heavy responsibility with a smile all the time. You can see the difference between the two. The intellect has been trained, has been evolved to carry heavy burdens with a smile. What must be that tremendous development!

Jitātmā, ‘he or she has conquered oneself’; *vigataspṛhaḥ,* ‘all cravings have been overcome’; *spṛhā* means outward moving craving. Such a person attains *naiṣkarmya siddhi,* ‘perfect non-doing state’, a state in which one is doing nothing while still working. When a person has no desire in the heart, he or she goes into that state of *naiṣkarmya,* ‘free from all action’, because there is no impelling force called desire for action. But, still if one acts, it is due to some other force which is the force of love, force of compassion. That action has no excitement about it. So, *naiṣkarmya siddhi* is a wonderful expression in Vedanta. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is bringing the blessing of that state to an average worker, an industrial worker, a housewife; he or she can achieve *naiṣkarmya siddhi* by this training in *askata buddhi vigataspṛha.* It is just like putting a drop of oil to a creaking door. This is possible in human life. Why is there this shouting and howling at the time of work? There is so little efficiency in the human being concerned. That is the strength that comes from this spiritual discipline of work. *Sannyāsena,* ‘by that *sannyāsa*’; that is real *sannyāsa.* We renounce all cravings; we renounce all little self-centred attitudes; and new strength comes to us from the evolved *buddhi* in our psychic energy system. That *buddhi* is the nearest to the infinite Atman behind. That *buddhi* is the greatest asset that we can have in human life. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells everyone to develop that *buddhi;* to

depend on that *buddhi*. He had said in an earlier chapter: *dadāmi buddhiyogam tam,* 'I give *buddhiyoga* to them'. That *buddhi* is everything. Through that *buddhi*, we can achieve the highest.

Asakta buddhiḥ sarvatra jitātmā vigataspṛhaḥ—these are some of the great ideas that will revolutionize the human situation. Detachment—what a wonderful teaching is detachment! We are working, we are dealing with human beings, and yet there is inside us a tremendous sense of detachment; there is zest in life, and yet detachment! These two go together here. Normally they do not go together. When I have zest in life, I am deeply attached. When I am detached, I become apathetic. I don't concern myself with anybody. That is called ordinary kind of detachment. We see that some people develop that kind of apathetic attitude in a household. In psychology it is called apathia. Apathia means that there is no interest in anything; one simply sits in a dark corner. It seems externally to be a high state of the mind; internally, it is a very pitiable state. A human being can achieve such contradictory states in life. We have seen it in the twelfth chapter. Can we become very fearless, and at the same time gentle? Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that such a person is My true devotee. Very fearless and yet very gentle—that doesn't usually happen in society. When we are fearless, we become a source of fear to other people. And when we are gentle, everybody can frighten us also. These are the things that we see normally. But we can achieve intense fearlessness and intense gentleness as well. Similarly, here too, one can develop tremendous detachment and tremendous concern for the welfare and happiness of all. That is the type of mind Śrī Kṛṣṇa wants us to evolve. The whole world will be a heaven tomorrow if a good number of people develop these qualities. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to tell later on. We can develop a perfect society by a proper philosophy of life and work. Next, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says what happens to one who has achieved this *siddhi* or perfection.

सिद्धिं प्राप्तो यथा ब्रह्म तथाप्नोति निबोध मे।
समासेनैव कौन्तेय निष्ठा ज्ञानस्य या परा॥५०॥

Siddhim prāpto yathā brahma tathāpnoti nibodha me;
Samāsenaiva kaunteya niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā — 18. 50

‘Learn from Me in brief, O son of Kuntī, how reaching such perfection, one attains to Brahman, that supreme consummation of knowledge.’

Having achieved that kind of perfection in daily life in the field of work, how does one attain Brahman? *Nibodha me,* that you ‘learn from Me’; *samāsenaiva,* ‘in brief’; *siddhim prāpto yathā,* ‘how, having reached perfection’; *brahma tathā āpnoti,* ‘a person thereby attains to Brahman’; *niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā,* which is ‘that supreme consummation of knowledge’. What is Brahman?, *jñānasya parā niṣṭhā*, ‘the supreme consummation of knowledge’. ‘Know from Me’, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa, ‘the process by which knowledge reaches its consummation in the realization of Brahman’. It is a wonderful statement. Look at the new born baby. It is interested in pleasure and comfort. But very soon you find it seeking for light, for knowledge. Being puzzled, it seeks knowledge, here, there and everywhere. In a new born baby’s eyes you can see a tremendous sense of wonder. From that confined place in my mother’s womb, where have I come to? I have been thrown into this wonderful world; what is this world that I see around me? That is the kind of wonder that strikes a new born child. And in English language we say, wonder is the beginning of knowledge. Without wonder one cannot develop knowledge at all. So, through that wonder a child becomes a seeker of knowledge. He or she asks this or that of the mother. Then the child goes to the school, the college, and develops oneself into a great scientist. This is called the search for knowledge. Where does this search end?, in the realization of Brahman. The Vedantic statement is: Brahman is the consummation of all knowledge. This is the language used by Śaṅkarācārya in his commentary on the *Brahmasūtras: Átma ekatva vidyā pratipattaye sarve vedāntā ārabhyante,* ‘all Upaniṣads (i.e. Vedanta) are there for the attainment of the knowledge of the unity of the Self’. We are essentially one. There is only one infinite Self in the whole universe, and that is realized in experience, and not merely in an intellectual conception. Again *anubhava avasānam brahma vijñānam,* ‘knowledge of Brahman consummates in the experience of Brahman.’ The baby started with the knowledge of Brahman in various departments of life—its own body, the little world around it. The whole universe is nothing but Brahman. The baby takes a little section and tries to understand it. Then as it grows, it understands more and more. This pursuit

of knowledge reaches its consummation in that *Brahma-anubhava*, 'experience of Brahman'. *Anubhava avasānam,* 'consummation of knowledge in experience'; we realize Brahman, the infinite One. So, all experiences get their final consummation in that experience of Brahman, the All, the Infinite. That is the language there. 'So, I shall tell you how it is done, how this is achieved,' says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. How from that stage where you have attained this perfection in action—that spirit of detachment, freedom from all kinds of cravings, and renunciation of all action in inaction—you realize that oneness with Brahman; *nibodh me*, that you 'know from Me,' says Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

बुद्ध्या विशुद्धया युक्तो धृत्यात्मानं नियम्य च।
शब्दादीन्विषयांस्त्यक्त्वा रागद्वेषौ व्युदस्य च॥५१॥

Buddhyā viśuddhayā yukto dhṛtyātmānam niyamya ca;
Śabdādīn viṣayān tyaktvā rāga dveṣau vyudasya ca—18. 51

'Being endued with a pure intellect, and subduing the body and the senses with fortitude; relinquishing sound and such other sense objects, and abandoning attraction and hatred;'

Some of the spiritual training programmes for the human mind and the senses are contained here. *Buddhyā viśuddhayā yukto,* 'endued with that pure intellect'*; dhṛtyātmānam niyamya ca*, 'subduing the body and the senses with fortitude'*; śabdādīn viṣayān tyaktvā*, 'relinquishing sound and such other sense objects' by overcoming their hold on us, becoming free from them*; rāga dveṣau vyudasya ca*, 'and abandoning attraction or love and hatred'. The mind is being taken away from dualities, from contrary experiences.

विविक्तसेवी लघ्वाशी यतवाक्कायमानसः।
ध्यानयोगपरो नित्यं वैराग्यं समुपाश्रितः॥५२॥

Viviktasevī laghvāśī yatavākkāyamānasaḥ;
Dhyānayogaparo nityam vairāgyam samupāśritaḥ —18. 52

'One who resorts to a sequestered spot; eats but little; who has speech, body and mind controlled; who is ever engaged in the *yoga* of meditation,

and who is possessed of dispassion;'

Various mental states in spiritual practices are mentioned: *viviktasevī*, 'one who resorts to a sequestered place'*;* going to a quiet place for the purpose of *sādhanā*; *laghvāśī*, 'who eats but little'*; yatavākkāyamānasaḥ*, 'who has speech, body and mind controlled'*; dhyānayogaparo nityam*, 'who is ever engaged in the yoga of meditation'*; vairāgyam samupāśritaḥ*, 'possessed of dispassion'. These are the various processes which we do to attain that state of mind which can realize Brahman. This is how one prepares the mind for it.

अहंकारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं परिग्रहम्।
विमुच्य निर्ममः शान्तो ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते॥५३॥

Ahamkāram balam darpam kāmam krodham parigraham;
Vimucya nirmamaḥ śānto brahmabhūyāya kalpate —18. 53

'One who has forsaken egoism, power, pride, lust, wrath, and property, freed from the notion of "mine"; and who is tranquil—becomes fit for becoming Brahman.'

Vimucya, 'having forsaken'*; ahamkāram*, 'the egoistic attitude'*;* having given up the fat ego that is within; *balam*, having renounced 'the sense of power'*; darpam*, having overcome 'pride'*;* and *kāmam krodham parigraham*, 'lust, anger, and a sense of seeking property'*; nirmamaḥ*, 'free from the notion of "mine"'*;* and *śānto*, 'tranquil'. The notion of 'I' and 'mine' makes us small, and by renouncing it one develops tranquillity. That person 'becomes fit for becoming Brahman', *brahmabhūyāya kalpate.* All this is achieved in the context of work and life itself.

ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न कांक्षति।
समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते पराम्॥५४॥

Brahmabhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāmkṣati;
Samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu madbhaktim labhate parām—18. 54

'One who has attained Brahman, and who is tranquil-minded, neither grieves nor desires; same to all beings, one attains supreme devotion unto

Me.'

Such a person, 'has become one with Brahman', *brahmabhūtaḥ.* This is a great idea. Such a person was being evolved out of the ordinary person. What was that ordinary person?, *vyaktibhūtaḥ,* 'the feeling that I am a separate individual', with a separate ego. This is how we start our journey. We then proceed to the training of the mind and the elimination of the ego. This has been discussed in all the eighteen chapters. And now comes the final state. The word used is *brahmabhūtaḥ,* 'one who has become one with Brahman.' How does that happen? This is a subject which will be of immense benefit to humanity today. How to handle this ego, this individuality in each one of us? It is only a 'provisional *delusion* of considerable strategic value in evolution', as *The Science of Life* by H. G. Wells and Julian Huxley described it. All happiness, welfare, and peace depend upon that one art—art of handling this sense of individuality. Several occasions we have had before in our life where we collided with other individuals all the time. Normally, that is what we find—at the stage of ego awareness, there is collision between individuals. All violence and crime, misunderstanding and unhappiness, and peacelessness, come from this collision of one individuality with another individuality. In spite of such collisions, there may also be occasions of happy relationship in our lives; some luminous moments may be there. But that will merely be a freakish phenomenon. Normal phenomenon is collision—like a billiard ball colliding with other billiard balls, in the language of Bertrand Russell. The whole subject of human development and fulfilment evolves from this particular theme: how to handle this focus of individuality within us by which we can live happily and in peace with other people, and project that peace onto the outside world as well.

That is a very important subject for all people. We began as separate individuals, often colliding with others. Then, slowly changes come—changes which have been indicated in all these various chapters of the *Gītā.*

The spiritual growth or expansion of the individual, or *vikāsa,* as we call it in Sanskrit, is this transformation. In the beginning it is 'I' as a separate individual; then, 'I' as one with 'you'. In married life the husband and wife feel one with each other. That is the beginning, and it should also last. So,

there is some expansion; there is a place for 'you' in my thinking. I love you, I serve you—in this way we begin. But we don't know how to handle it. Therefore, it becomes a fictitious experience; not a genuine, permanent experience. The *Gītā* gives you the psychology and philosophy of that human development. That was the subject of the earlier seventeen chapters ending up in this eighteenth chapter. And here we come to the state of *brahmabhūtaḥ,* 'becoming one with Brahman'. A river starts from the mountains; it is like an individual. Then other rivers join it; it becomes a bigger river, but it is still a river. Then, it joins the sea. That confluence of the river and the sea is a wonderful situation. I have seen from an aeroplane the river Ganges entering the Bay of Bengal. So also, the mighty Airāvati river in Burma entering into the Bay of Bengal. For miles we can still see the individuality of the river. But after some distance, the river has disappeared into the ocean. It was the ocean, and it has now become one with the ocean. That is the meaning of *brahmabhūtaḥ* in this verse.

Prasannātmā, 'his or her inner life is absolutely tranquil', calm and serene. There is no separate individuality and so no friction; all that has been overcome. *Na śocati na kāmkṣati,* 'he or she is free from grief and desire'. These various contradictions of life—excessive joy, excessive sorrow, excessive depression—do not touch that person. A certain balance has come within. These high-tensioned emotions that we find in individuals, do not come to such a mind. It is so calm and steady.

Samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu, 'feeling his or her oneness with all beings', a sense of equality and unity with all beings. As Brahman we are one with all. I am not a separate individual colliding with someone else. When we realize our oneness, all collisions will stop. Only pure unity and relationship based on love can prevail then.

Madbhaktim labhate parām, 'he or she gets supreme devotion to Me', the infinite Self of all. We have seen ordinary *bhakti* in people—a sort of contractual *bhakti.* People go to the Tirupati temple, offer some five rupees, and *expect some return from that.* But, if the return is not there, we may not even go again! But this *bhakti* is one-pointed; there is no question of contract, or buying and selling. Pure love of God—this is how it is called.

In the seventh chapter Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke about of four types of devotees. This is the fourth one, the *jñānī.* The other three are the *ārtaḥ, jijñāsu,* and *arthārthi.* Further, the Lord had said that He is one with the *jñāni.* That state is being described now—complete identification with the Divine, and removal of one's identification with one's separate self. The separate self is what we try to handle and educate in all ethical life. The central theme of Buddhism is this: there is no such thing as a separate self; it is merely an illusion, a delusion. The sooner we overcome it, the better. Out of that only comes moral activity and moral attitude. The greatest subject in ethics is this *vyakti-vikāsa.* We feel our oneness with all. No enmity, *tato na vijugupsate,* as the *Æśā Upaniṣad* said: 'When we see the same Atman in every being, and all beings in the Atman', what comes of us?, only love—a positive force—can find a place; *tato na vijugupsate*, 'then no hatred is possible for anyone'. *Mad bhaktim labhate parām,* 'he attains that supreme devotion centered in Me'. That is what is being developed in these few verses, until we come to what our Śri Rāmānujācārya has called the *carama śloka,* the highest and the final verse of the *Gītā* describing complete self-surrender to the Divine.

In the eleventh book of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* there are so many verses dealing with who is a true *bhāgavata* or a devotee. Very often we see there verses ending with: 'that is a real *bhāgavata*'. Many beautiful statements are there. If one can achieve even a fraction of it, it will be a great blessing. All love is included in that Love of God, because God is all, is in the hearts of all. That is why He is the all. A devotee of God is a lover of all. His God is one. In the *Nārada Bhakti Sūtra*, and in similar other texts, we find the teaching that, to a devotee, God is present in every being. No hatred; love and compassion alone can come from such a devotee, because he or she finds his or her Divine in the hearts of all beings. That is his or her line of thinking and spiritual practice. When we develop that *bhakti,* then we understand what is God?, what is all this life? Till then it is only an attempt 'to understand'; now it is 'real understanding'.

भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान्यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः।
ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरम्॥५५॥

Bhaktyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaścāsmi tattvataḥ;
Tato mām tattvato jñātvā viśate tadanantaram — 18. 55

'By devotion, one knows Me in reality, what and who I am; then having known Me in reality, one forthwith enters into Me.'

Through that *bhakti,* we understand what is God, what is His relevance, what is His infinite scope. All this we understand only when that pure *bhakti* comes to us. *Bhaktyā mām abhijānāti tattvataḥ*, 'by devotion he or she knows Me in truth'*; yāvān yaścāsmi*, 'what and who I am'*;* what is this *Bhagavān* or *Æśvara* whom I love? What is His dimension, what is His nature, etc. Śaṅkarācārya comments on the words *yāvān* and *yaśca asmi* by saying that, *yāvān* means 'it is the Divine which is also in the *līlā* or world manifestation aspect'; *yaśca asmi* means, 'in the *nitya* or transcendental aspect also, it is Divine'. *Nitya* and *līlā* are one, said Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly. Whatever is *nitya*, is also *līlā.* Whatever is *līlā*, is also *nitya.* The same Brahman is both *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa.* And therefore everywhere it is only He, the infinite ocean of Reality—*Satyam, jñānam, anantam brahma*. So, with this *bhakti* one understands the true nature of the Divine, as It is in Itself.

Tato mām tattvato jñātvā, 'having thus known Me in truth'; *viśate tadanantaram,* 'he or she enters into Me.' He or she becomes one with Me. He or she enters into the Divine. There is no physical entrance here, clarifies Śaṅkarācārya. The obstruction to manifestation is removed; that ego was the obstruction, and when that goes away, what is here is also there. Sri Ramakrishna says: place a small stick on a sheet of water. You will find a left side and a right side which are separate. Actually, it is not separate; it merely *looks* separate. That stick *seems* to separate the two. In fact, it is only one sheet of water. So, when you remove the stick, you realize the ever present oneness of the sheet of water. That is the work that is done here. The distinction that obtained till now, which was fictitious but which gave a lot of trouble, has now vanished. And therefore, we are able to enter into the Supreme. We were one with It; we *thought* we were separate; that attitude is gone now, and we are now one with It.

In all mystical literature—Christian, Sufi, Hindu, Buddhist—we find this type of consummation: we enter into the Divine. We are one with the

Divine. *That* is our goal. This separation from that Divine makes us feel as if alienated from the Divine. 'No! We must return'—that feeling is there, and it makes us struggle. That makes us dissatisfied. We get money, but we are dissatisfied. We get power, but we are dissatisfied. Always the mind strives for something else. That is Truth. That 'something else' is there within us. We are looking for it. We find in all mystical literature that this striving ends when that realization comes. Perfect peace and fulfilment becomes achieved at that time. Unity is that experience. The same Consciousness of the infinite Reality is here in this limited individual. This *cit* and that *Cit* are one and the same. That understanding comes.

So, *tato mām tattvato jñātvā,* 'therefore, knowing Me in truth'; *viśate tadanantaram,* 'he or she enters into Me,' becomes one with Me. The Ganga river starting from Gangotri, going through various states of India, finally reaches the Bay of Bengal. That river has found its consummation in the ocean. It came from the ocean through evaporation, and it has gone back to the ocean. Likewise, we have all come from Him, and we go back unto Him, that supreme Reality. That is how all spiritual philosophies discuss this goal of human life. Everybody *shall* become one with the Divine. That is our goal. We have that Divine already within us, and It is pushing us unknowingly towards that direction. It gives us dissatisfaction until we achieve something higher, something still higher. That dissatisfaction is the nature of the human heart. No other animal has dissatisfaction like that. Only the human being has dissatisfaction because he or she has confidence of something profound, and not knowing where It is, makes him or her search for It. Therefore, in our literature, we give the example of the special deer of the Tibetan areas; an animal having a bit of that particular scent in its navel, and that scent makes it run about here and there. Ultimately, it sits quiet and finds that the scent is coming from within itself! That is the nature of this spiritual quest and its end according to our mystical literature.

Anantaram means that there is no time sequence here. It is always there; we remove the obstruction, and then everything is the same. Remove that little stick on the sheet of water, and the water is just one and the same; not left and right, not here and there. For convenience, we may speak of here and there. It is like what happens when I build this wall and cut space into two; there will be an inside and an outside. Space does not know any of

these differences. One infinite space is there. Similarly, Reality is one and non-dual; we make a distinction within it by our notion of individuality or ego. That is a fictitious notion. We then try to eliminate it through various activities.

First, we strengthen that notion. See the wonder of it! To a baby, we don't say eliminate the 'I'. It has no 'I' at all. We produce the 'I' in the baby; we strengthen it; we always praise the baby. It is only later that we begin to tell the child to eliminate this 'I'. If we have to live with others, we have to eliminate this 'I'; we have to soften it, we have to go beyond it. We should expand our concept of 'I'. That has been the teaching in all these various chapters. Now we are coming to the final act: the little 'I' goes away, is set aside, is dissolved in that Infinite One. He alone is, we are nothing. Thou alone art true—that knowledge will come. We enter into that Reality.

सर्वकर्माण्यपि सदा कुर्वाणो मद्व्यपाश्रय:।
मत्प्रसादादवाप्नोति शाश्वतं पदमव्ययम्॥५६॥

Sarvakarmāṇi api sadā kurvāṇo madvyapāśrayaḥ;
Matprasādāt avāpnoti śāśvatam padam avyayam — 18. 56

'Even doing all actions always taking refuge in Me—by My grace one attains to the eternal immutable State.'

'Even though you are working all the time', *sarva karmāṇi api sadā kurvāṇo;* go on working, there is no harm; that we have to give up this work to achieve knowledge, is not the stand. In the context of life and work, we can achieve this realization. That is the *central* theme of the *Gītā.* A housewife, a labourer, an administrator—everyone—doing one's own work can develop this expansion of one's own individuality. In fact, that work and life is the field for this development. We have to use this life and work as an occasion for our own spiritual development—from the limited individual to that highest Reality. This theme was stated by Śri Kṛṣṇa in the second chapter by defining *yoga* as *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*. We have to realize that infinite Brahman and be a *brahmabhūto*. Then no hatred, no

negative forces can come from us once we achieve even a little of this kind of growth, what to speak of getting it in its infinite dimension.

The statement is very emphatic: *sadā kurvāṇo,* 'always he or she is doing work', and yet he or she is in Brahman. It is not necessary to give up work to become one in Brahman. *That is the stress in the Gītā all the time*. *Madvyapāśrayaḥ,* 'having dedicated oneself to Me; that ultimate Reality'. Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses the word *mat,* 'I', because He is speaking as the infinite Atman in the hearts of all beings. *Matprasādāt avāpnoti*, 'through My grace one will achieve', the highest; *śāśvatam padam avyayam,* 'the eternal state from which there is no decay at all'. That state is eternal and infinite. Till now we were a spark of the fire; now we become the fire itself. No more will there be this kind of littleness, finiteness, creature idea attached to us. So, through My grace, one achieves that state of infinitude which is one's true nature. We did not know it, but our life gave us this education: 'I am not this tiny little thing. There is something infinite about me.' All greatness comes from that understanding. By not understanding the matter correctly, we try to expand our ego, fatten it, and that is extremely harmful to oneself and to others. *That expansion of the ego, by which we destroy the self-respect of other people, is a dangerous ego. That expansion of the ego by which we encourage other people also and restore them to their own self-respect, that is the correct infinite expansion.* These two are to be properly understood. This is the concept of the superhuman in Vedanta. We, as human beings, are limited people. But the superhuman is unlimited; he is *brahmabhūtaḥ.* He or she becomes the centre of peace, love, and harmony.

However, in the West, Nietzsche, the German philosopher, developed the concept of the superman. That superman is a dangerous person—very egoistic, arrogant, full of power and energy. He or she can destroy the life of millions of people. 'The superman comes on the scene in violence of deed and demeanour'; this is Nietzsche's sentence. That ego becomes expanded and fattened, and becomes a danger to everybody else. That is what we have seen in that concept of the superman. Hitler was one such superman, exactly as predicted of the Nietzsche's concept of the superman. And we have seen the result.

The other superman or superwoman makes us happy, confers happiness and peace on people. That is the real source of spiritual energy and power. The ordinary human being becomes the superhuman being. That super-person is of this nature. He or she has realized one's own infinite nature as Brahman. He or she has become *brahmabhūta.* And so, *tato na vijugupsate,* he or she has 'no hatred'; no negative energy can come out of such a person. Only love, which is positive, can come out of such an individual. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's super-person is of that nature. In the Upaniṣads also it is there. This is what is stressed in this section of the *Gītā.*

Wherefrom comes this grace or *mat prasāda*? Till now we did not hear much about this grace. Occasionally a suggestion came from here and there. But towards the end of this chapter the *Gītā* is going to be centrally concerned with this concept of divine grace. A certain development has come, and therefore, now we can understand the meaning of grace. The body, mind and the self in us have to be developed in a particular way to be able to appreciate that wonderful reality called 'the grace of the Divine.' With all the previous training that one received in the seventeen chapters, one has come to a particular state where one can say that he or she, being a devotee, appreciates this wonderful idea of 'Divine Grace and surrender to the Divine' which is going to be the last note in the music of the *Gītā.* We began with tremendous strength, stress on individuality, manliness, etc. Now, having developed all this, we are able to understand the Truth of things—'that Brahman alone exists and that we are just a spark of the Divine; we have no separate identity; we are one with the Divine.' It is at this stage that grace becomes operative, and we appreciate and derive benefit from it. In the earlier stages of life, we cannot understand or benefit from that grace.

चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः।
बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्चित्तः सततं भव॥५७॥

Cetasā sarvakarmāṇi mayi sannyasya matparaḥ;
Buddhiyogam upāśritya maccittaḥ satatam bhava — 18. 57

'Resigning mentally all deeds unto Me, having Me as the highest goal, resorting to *buddhi-yoga,* ever fix your mind on Me.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *cetasā sarvakarmāṇi mayi sannyasya matparaḥ,* 'mentally dedicating all your actions to Me, and dedicating oneself also to Me'. Not only the actions, but also yourself as the person should be dedicated to Me, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Renounce all actions mentally. *Cetas* or *citta* means the mind. Do not abandon work; go on doing work; but, mentally renounce all actions. It is a wonderful state of mind—working and yet not working. The burden of work, the tension of work will not come. Sri Ramakrishna has referred to women carrying water-filled pots on their heads, and at the same time, smiling and talking freely with each other; so much of load is there, but one does not feel the load. Such a one talks to others but there is no contortion on his or her face. That is the art of carrying a weight, always smiling. Life is like that; can you carry its burdens like that, with that simplicity, with that peace, with that cessation of all tension? That is *yoga.* Unless you have a touch of the Divine within, that power won't come. It is not a physical power, not an intellectual power; it is a spiritual power; it comes from God Himself hidden in the heart of all.

Buddhiyogam upāśritya, 'taking the help of *buddhi-yoga*', *yoga* of *buddhi;* it is the original statement of the *Gītā* in the thirty ninth verse of the second chapter. *Buddhiyoga* was introduced there.

Buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha karmabandham prahāsyasi —

We should develop that *yoga-buddhi.* With that *yoga-buddhi* we can live our life doing all actions; by that we will not at all be bound. We should do all work, but mentally renounce it. We can be free through that. That is the promise in the second chapter. Two types of people are there: (1) the ascetic people, who renounce all actions, go to a forest, and try to realize Brahman in *samādhi,* and (2) people who have to work here in society, and yet realize the highest. Can they do it? 'Yes, I tell you', says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. How? 'Resort to *buddhi-yoga.*' That is the language Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses there. Two types of *yoga* are there*:* (1) *Sāṅkhya yoga,* and (2) *Buddhi-yoga.* My *buddhi-yoga* is for people who have to work in the world, live in this world, and yet who love to achieve spiritual development. To them I give this philosophy of comprehensive spirituality. Develop this *buddhi yoga* or *samatva yoga,* 'a luminous, strong, and steady mind' oriented to oneness with other people. It

means that only service can come out of that *buddhi.* All actions are included in this.

That verse (2. 39) was the beginning. Now it is being referred to again towards the end of this great book. While dealing with those verses on this subject, I had told that *buddhi* is that psychic energy in a human being which has been thoroughly trained, disciplined and purified. It has become a luminous instrument for human development. The same psychic energy functions through the sensory system. I see, I hear, I do all this. I think, I make a will of my own. All this is psychic energy functioning in different ways. To start with, we had not refined it. A little refinement gives us ordinary character energy. Still more refinement gives one this *buddhi.* Highly refined psychic energy is *buddhi.* It is luminous and has a tremendous impact, tremendous power, so that obstacles vanish before that *buddhi,* because along with intellect there is also that willpower. *Buddhi* is integrated intelligence and willpower. It is also purified, and so cannot do harm to anyone. It can only do good. And that is the concept of *buddhi* in its highest development in Vedanta.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa stressed this point earlier: *buddhau śaraṇam anviccha,* 'take refuge in *buddhi*'. Through *buddhi*, one can achieve everything. 'Whenever I want to bless anybody, I help him or her to achieve that *buddhi-yoga*', says Śrī Kṛṣṇa (10. 10): *dadāmi buddhiyogam tam yena mām upayānti te.* They come to Me through the help of that *buddhi.* So evolve *buddhi.* Any character development is the product of this evolution of *buddhi.* Five per cent *buddhi* must be there for you to have ordinary character. A good citizen, doing service to the people in his or her department of work, exhibits character. That person has achieved a certain measure of this evolution of *buddhi* out of his or her psychic energy system. And this evolution can go on expanding further and further, and purifying, so that when it comes to the purest state, one gets this *buddhi-yoga.* It is by one's own effort that one refines the energy within. I have used the word 'refine' again and again on several Sundays here. As we refine crude oil and produce beautiful petroleum products, even so the human mind should be able to refine one's own experiences and bring out of them beautiful character products—efficiency in action, concern for others, tremendous peace of mind, etc. What a beautiful product it is! All this comes from the

same psychic energy. The energy that goes now to destroy other people, to exploit other people, that same energy will become pure energy, character energy, citizenship energy. What a beautiful idea—the energy of a devotee of God! One is only handling this energy by training it to rise to higher and still higher attitudes, until one gets this energy of *buddhi.*

Yoga-buddhi is 'a *buddhi* which is in tune with the Divine', because just behind this *buddhi* is the Atman. The senses are far away, but the *buddhi* is the nearest. Śaṅkarācārya calls *buddhi* as *nediṣṭham brahma,* 'nearest to Brahman'. In our own system, in all of us, there is the Divine. That is the first teaching of Vedanta. Swami Vivekananda puts it as, 'Each soul is potentially divine'. If so, how shall we manifest it? Senses are far away. So, don't depend upon the senses. Senses must be controlled and disciplined, and be subject to this *buddhi,* reason, or enlightened intelligence. Therefore, evolution of *buddhi* is the way to character. When we speak of value-oriented education, it only means we are helping the student to evolve this kind of *buddhi,* this *yoga-buddhi,* in each one of them. We begin with five per cent, then climb to ten per cent, and go on further. Even then it is wonderful. Unfortunately, very often there is no *buddhi* at all. Some human beings behave as a bundle of nerves, a bundle of emotions. Any thing goes wrong and he or she immediately reacts violently, and goes about burning buses around. There is no *buddhi* behind such actions. In our political life, at least, there is no *buddhi.* There is crude human energy. Just imagine, the one who is running the government today, tomorrow he or she joins the opposition and starts burning buses! When he or she was in office, that very person stopped burning of buses. But when he or she ceases to be a part of the government, he or she starts burning buses. What is the nature of that *buddhi*?, crude psychic *buddhi.* That is the state of our country today.

When people understand this teaching, they will develop the same energy, they will purify it, and socialise it more and more, making it a *suhṛt*, or a friend of all, for the strength of the nation. That kind of transformation of the human being has not taken place yet. It has to take place; otherwise, it will be our undoing. So, the *Gītā* speaks of *buddhiyoga* and asks us to take resort to it. Then *maccittaḥ,* 'the mind becomes fixed in Me, in that infinite One', who is in you as also in me. There is no opposition to the other person. It is only a technical opposition. Complete opposition is not

there. That is why a sporting type of political attitude is necessary: we will maintain opposition, but it won't become enmity, trying to destroy the other party. In a healthy democratic politics, opposition and the government can mix with each other. They are human beings; they are fellow citizens. For a particular purpose they are in the opposition. But in India now, opposition means opposition; that is why they have converted our political life into what I always describe as American football—each one trying to pull down the other, trample over the other, leaving the ball to itself. That is American football. And Mohan Bagan football means, you are active with the football. You don't run against other players. Take the ball and take it to the goal—that is healthy football.

Our politics has to change from one to the other. *Maccittaḥ* means one's '*buddhi* rests in Me,' rests in the Divine. Remember these words. They do not mean a God sitting far away in the sky. The first lesson we must learn in Vedanta is: whenever the word God is used, whenever Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses the word 'I', He always refers to that One infinite Reality which is the inner Self of all. What a beautiful conception! *Yat sākṣāt aparokṣāt brahma ya ātmā sarvāntaraḥ*—a profound utterance in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. Yat sākṣāt aparokṣāt brahma,* 'that supreme Brahman of the nature of pure experience—immanent and transcendent'; *ya ātmā sarvāntaraḥ,* 'that Atman who is the Self of all'—not some far away entity. I want to know that Brahman, says the disciple to the teacher. And that is the central theme of all the Upaniṣads. The Atman in me and in you is known to us as the little individual. But, the Atman which is the Self of all, is what I want to know. That is the great subject regarding the Atman, the infinite Self, the Self of all, in the Upaniṣads. It is mentioned in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: *aupaniṣadam puruṣam pṛchāmaḥ.* The disciple is telling the teacher: 'tell me about the *Puruṣa* taught in the Upaniṣads'. Then, Śaṅkarācārya comments: *upaniṣadsveva vijñāyate, na anyatra,* 'this subject is taught only in the Upaniṣads, and nowhere else' in the world's literature. They may speak of a God sitting in the heaven—extra-cosmic, monotheistic. But, God as the inner Self of all is taught in such clear language only in the Upaniṣads, in Vedanta. So, whenever Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses the word 'I', He does not separate Himself but unifies saying, 'I am one with you'. In the last verse of the fifth chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'think of Me

as your Friend'; *suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām,* 'I am the Friend of all beings'. *Jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati,* 'knowing Me, you attain supreme Peace'. So, that is the concept of God throughout this Vedantic literature—something that is experiential. *Ya ātmā sarvāntaraḥ,* 'the Atman that is the inner Self of all', and therefore, we can experience Brahman—not merely *believe* in It.

Belief can come to anybody; one may believe in a faraway God. We can't do more about it. We can't know him; We can't take a spacecraft and go to that God somewhere far away in the universe. But the God of Vedanta can be realized because He is our own Self; behind the *buddhi* is that infinite Self. Śaṅkarācārya calls it, *anubhava avasānam brahma vijñānam* in his *Sūtra Bhāṣya*, 'knowledge of Brahman consummates in the experience of Brahman'. Not merely knowledge of Brahman as something external, but an experience of Brahman as our very Self. Can we experience Brahman?, yes, because He is our own Self. He is the Self of our self. Through the Atman, one realizes Brahman. That Brahman is the Atman of all. Therefore, realize Him.

And it is consciously expressed in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* where it is said (2. 15):

Yadātmatatvena tu brahmatatvam
dīpopameneha yuktaḥ prapaśyet;
Ajam dhruvam sarvatatvairviśuddham
jñātvā devam mucyate sarvapāśaiḥ —

'When the self-controlled spiritual aspirant realizes, in this very body, the truth of Brahman through the truth of the Atman, self-luminous as light, then, knowing the Divinity which is unborn, eternal, and untouched by the modifications of nature, he is freed from all bondage.'

There is a passage, very similar to this, in the *Koran* (from the sayings of Prophet Mohammad) known as *Hādith-e-Suidsi*, referred to often by Jalaluddin Rumi in his famous *Masnavi*:

Man arafa nai sahū
faqo araba nab bahū —

'He alone who recognizes his own Self can recognize his God.'

‘The kingdom of God is within you’, assures Jesus. Jalauddin Rumi also gives expression to this truth:

‘In each human spirit is a Christ concealed, to be helped or hindered, to be hurt or healed; If from any human soul you lift the veil, you will find a Christ there hidden without fail.’

That stress on experience made for tremendous compassion in the world of religion in India. So, we don’t destroy an atheist or an agnostic or anybody. After all, what is belief? ‘We believe that there is a God’. If we don’t believe in a Godly life, what is the use of a belief in a God? So, belief is nothing to us. Many great saints were originally atheistic or agnostic. Swami Vivekananda himself was an agnostic. Sri Ramakrishna was an agnostic when he began spiritual life. We don’t complain about these things at all, because it is experience that is needed, and not an advanced type of belief. If we say, ‘We believe’, then we remain at that stage only; we are stuck with a cosy comfortable belief. That is not religion in India. It is a power to set the soul on fire—I must be alive to the Truth, if there is a Truth. That is the feeling in India. That is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses the word ‘I’ as the inner Self of all. *Ahamātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūtāśayasthitaḥ,* ‘I am the Self of all in the heart of beings, O Arjuna’, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa (10. 20). That is the Self, the ‘I’ used by Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Satatam bhava, ‘constantly remain’ with your mind fixed in Me. Never again shall it deviate from there. Because the Atman is steady, the mind fixed in Atman will also be steady. With this attitude we should do all our actions. It is a philosophy given to people engaged in work, engaged in day-to-day living. Within that context, we are developing something in ourself. Something of infinite value, our own Self, becomes realized through the work that we do. This is the type of development that has to come, and the consequence of this will be described later on.

A lazy person does not need any philosophy. It is the working person who needs a philosophy. Having said that, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is now concluding that great message meant for all. We have seen repeatedly that there is nothing sectional, nothing creedal, in all the teachings here. This philosophy is meant for any human being, wherever one is, man or woman, adult or child, to achieve one's fulfilment in one's own line of development. It does not put us anywhere else. That is why it has an appeal to every human being. The beautiful description of this teaching given in the very title of Edwin Arnold's book is '*The Song Celestial*'. What a beautiful translation: the Song Celestial! It is a music which can inspire every heart in any part of the world. That is divine music. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is a master of such great music: first, with his flute when he was young; and then, in this *Gītā,* when he became older. That is the music that will inspire hearts of men and women all over the world. They will become great workers. They will also become great lovers of humanity, making for harmony; and that is the message which *Gītā* is conveying through all these various chapters starting from the second. And we have now come to the end of that great exposition.

As I said earlier, this discussion will end in the *carama śloka* of the *Gītā* where the theme is complete transcendence of the ego, complete surrender to the Divine. We are now coming to the end of the *Gītā* and that is why the language is more and more of the type involving God's grace and our surrender to Him who is the Friend of all, who is the Self of all. Some great idea is coming; the 'I' is disappearing and God alone is left, resulting in complete surrender to God; and if it had been put earlier, we would have misunderstood it. Now we are in a position to understand that this surrender is truly unique. *Surrender at this stage is truly victory.* That is a wonderful language. Surrender at an early stage is never victory. But at this stage, surrender is victory. That is what is going to be illustrated in the coming verses.

मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्तरिष्यसि।
अथ चेत्त्वमहंकारान्न श्रोष्यसि विनंक्ष्यसि॥५८॥

Maccittaḥ sarvadurgāṇi matprasadāt tariṣyasi;
Atha cet tvam ahaṅkārāt na śroṣyasi vinamkṣyasi —18. 58

‘Fixing your mind on Me, you shall, by My grace, overcome all obstacles; but if from self-conceit you will not hear Me, you may perish.’

This verse continues with the same topic. We saw in the previous verse, *cetasā sarvakarmāṇi mayi sannyasya,* ‘mentally renouncing all actions in me’; physically, go on doing actions. And, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, *maccittaḥ satatam bhava,* ‘constantly yoke your mind to Myself.’ In the present verse Śrī Kṛṣṇa says what happens to such a person. *Maccittaḥ sarvadurgāṇi matprasadāt tariṣyasi,* ‘such a person will overcome all difficulties and troubles in life because of that union with the Divine.’ There will be no troubles when the mind is united with the Divine. Śaṅkarācārya comments on *sarvadurgāṇi*: *durga* means troubles and difficulties in daily life. In our *samsāra,* one has to face many difficulties. And to give us the strength to face them, we have this teaching: be one with the Divine. We will then have a tremendous energy coming to us. An ordinary bank draws plenty of capital from the Reserve Bank. Nobody can run down that ordinary bank because the Reserve Bank is behind it. So, when we have the infinite One behind us, we will be full of resource. We will not run out of resource. *Matprasādāt tariṣyasi,* ‘through My grace, you shall cross over all difficulties.’ Because you have become one with Me, you are able to overcome all these ups and downs in life. Actually, the word *durga* also means a fort, or a high mountain. A place difficult to access is called *durga.* Also, Durga is a name of the Divine Mother. One who helps you to cross over difficulties is Durga Devī.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling this to Arjuna because he had said in the last verse of the first chapter that, ‘I am not going to fight’. It is to make Arjuna understand the situation and to make him do his duty that Śrī Kṛṣṇa started His instruction from the second chapter. Now, we are coming back to that once again. *Atha cet tvam ahaṅkārāt na śroṣyasi vinamkṣyasi,* ‘if through your ego, you won’t listen to Me, you will be in trouble.’ If through your strong ego, you don’t listen to what I say for your own welfare, you will be lost. That is the warning given by Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna. You have a fat ego which says, I am not going to follow these teachings. Well, it is up to you. You will be in trouble. You will get lost in life. *Vinamkṣyasi* means ‘you will get destroyed’. If you don’t do the right thing, naturally you will suffer. Why do we do so?, because of the fat ego. Because of our own pet

aversions, pet attachments, we hold on to that. Ego is one which attracts all sorts of pet opinions. We don't care for another person's point of view. It is good to be able to listen to another person also. One of the beautiful things we have been told in all the ancient books is: learn to listen. Do not always talk. Listening is a great art. There are people who can never listen. They will only talk; they will only advise others or dictate to others. Learn also to listen. Otherwise, we will be in trouble. And so, it is this fat ego that stands between us and other people, between us and God. That ego has to be attenuated, made smaller and weaker, so that the real Self shines. Ego must be transcended, is the supreme teaching in all ethics and spiritual life. The fattening of ego is only good when one is a baby, or a child. After that, the thinning of the ego is one's main work. This fat ego can make life miserable. One can't live with other people. How many times we have discussed this subject of transformation from the ego of individuality to the tremendous concern for other people coming through personality development. When an individual becomes a person, he or she can dig affections in other people. Otherwise, one keeps colliding with others. That ego has to be handled by every person. Strengthen it and then overcome it. That second stage is the most important stage for character development. 'If you don't follow these beneficent words, you will be destroying yourself', says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is going to tell, 'I am not dictating to you. I am giving you a piece of wisdom. It is for you to decide.' This comes later on. Even Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not dictate!

The next verse says:

यदहंकारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मन्यसे।
मिथ्यैष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्वां नियोक्ष्यति॥५९॥

Yad ahamkāram āśritya na yotsya iti manyase;
Mithyaiṣa vyavasāyaste prakṛtistvām niyokṣyati — 18. 59

'If, filled with self-conceit, you think, "I will not fight", vain is this resolve of yours; your *Prakṛti* will constrain you.'

Yad ahamkāram āśritya, 'if you resort to your egoistic attitude', and do not care for anybody's advice, and if with that attitude, *iti manyase,* 'you

think'; *na yotsye,* 'I am not going to fight'; *mithyaiṣa vyavasāyaste,* 'that resolve of yours is vain'; why?, because *prakṛtiḥ tvām niyokṣyati,* 'your very nature will make you fight.' You have got that nature within you. That *rajas* will make you work. I have seen many people who have given up their family lives and have gone to a holy place; and they built up a family in that place in no time! That *rajas* is there. What is the use of giving up this family? The wife tells the husband, 'You have to beg from many houses in that life of the recluse; you get it all in one house here!' Perfectly right. That *rājasik samskāra* is there in you; you will create a *samsāra* if you go even to a forest resort. Your *samsāra* within projects and you create a *samsāra* wherever you go. It is better to handle it here itself. And so, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling, 'Your own nature is very *rājasik*—full of assertion, activity'. Let us give an education to this nature. Work it out through good service to the people, service to the nation. That is the correct way to work out all these *rājasik* tendencies. *Mithyaiṣa vyavasāyaste,* 'that determination of yours is absolutely meaningless'. It is a false resolve. *Prakṛtiḥ tvām niyokṣyati,* 'your own *Prakṛti,* your own nature or *svabhāva,* will compel you to do'. Nature compels—that is a wonderful teaching in Western thought also. You may like to avoid a thing, but nature will compel you to do that. We are all subject to our own *svabhāva* or 'built in disposition'. We have to reckon with it. Just renouncing externally won't do, because they will return again. A certain writer said, 'you throw nature out through the door, it will come back through the window once again.' You cannot escape it; therefore, work it out by philosophically, rationally, channelizing these forces. That is a very slow process. And so, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

स्वभावजेन कौन्तेय निबद्धः स्वेन कर्मणा।
कर्तुं नेच्छसि यन्मोहात्करिष्यस्यवशोऽपि तत्॥६०॥

Svabhāvajena kaunteya nibaddhaḥ svena karmaṇā;
Kartum necchasi yan mohāt kariṣyasi avaśo'pi tat — 18. 60

'Fettered, O son of Kuntī, by your own *karma,* born of your own nature, what you, from delusion, desire not to do, you shall have to do in spite of yourself.'

Nibaddhaḥ svena karmaṇā, everybody is 'bound by his or her own *karma*'; *svabhāvajena,* 'based on *svabhāva* or one's own nature'. Whatever is my *svabhāva,* that will dictate a particular type of action for me. *Svena svabhāvajena karmaṇā*, 'by one's own *karma* born of one's own *svabhāva*' one is bound. That being the case, *kartum necchasi yan mohāt,* 'out of delusion, if you don't want to do that work', then what happens? *Kariṣyasi avaśo'pi tat,* 'you will be made to do that work in spite of yourself'. That *svabhāva* within you will force you to undertake that work without your own consent. The *svabhāva* has that power to make you do it without your own welcome, consent or acceptance. *Avaśaḥ* means 'helplessly'. Better to do it knowingly than helplessly. When we want to cut wood, we cut along the grain of the wood; then, it is easier to cut wood. Similarly also, we have to find out our own *samskāra* and work it out. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling a psychological truth to Arjuna once again at this stage. By your own *kṣatriya samskāra*—of the nature of doing hard work under challenging situations and being ever assertive—you are bound; that situation is there in you. Don't ignore it through your own egoistic idea.

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति।
भ्रामयन् सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया॥६१॥

Æśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānām hṛddeśe'rjuna tiṣṭhati;
Bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā —18. 61

'The Supreme Lord, O Arjuna, dwells in the hearts of all beings, causing all beings, by His *Māyā*, to revolve, (as if) mounted on a machine.'

In this verse comes the beautiful teaching which Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said earlier; there is a Divine hidden in all of us. God in Vedanta is present in the heart of all, and not somewhere above in the sky. That very famous verse comes here. Something like this had come earlier also in chapters seven and nine. Now He says: *Æśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānām hṛddeśe'rjuna tiṣṭhati,* 'Arjuna, in the hearts of all beings there is the *Æśvara,* the Supreme Divine.' *Sarvabhūtānām,* 'of all beings' including the insects, the worms, and the animals. In the heart of everyone there is the Divine. They cannot understand this truth, but a human being can understand this truth and realize it. That is the difference between the human being and all other

beings. God is present in the innermost recess of the human personality. When one becomes spiritual, one will be able to understand this truth. The second line says: *Bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā,* 'He causes, by His *Māyā,* all beings to revolve as if mounted on a machine.' The Divine is guiding all beings in their life and action just like a bird kept in a machine which is in rotation and the bird also is in rotation. The bird has no say in the matter. The machine is making the bird go round and round. Similarly, in all our activities, we think that we are doing those works; actually, there is a Divine force behind all this. He makes us do good, bad, and indifferent activities. The first teaching to be given to a human child, as we saw earlier, is self-reliance; have faith in yourself; work out your own destiny; work hard; it is a stress on *puruṣakāra* or personal effort. We don't bring God into the picture at this stage. Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly said, *āmi jantra tumi jantrī,* 'I am the machine, Thou art the operator.' I do what you make me do. It is a very high stage of human spiritual awareness.

Sri Ramakrishna used to sing a song. In *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* you will find it: *Tomār karma tumi koro mā loke bole kori āmi*, 'O Mother, all works are done by you, but people say, "I am doing all this work"'. Everything is He, not I. 'Thy will be done' is the last music of the spiritual life of any human being. Complete surrender, which will come in the next few verses, is the consummation of all spiritual striving. St. Paul said, 'not I, but the Christ that liveth in me,' everything is He and not I. When does it come? When the I has become sufficiently developed, chastened, then it understands this truth. Life's first stage is: education for manliness and strength. At the highest stage, we understand the other truth. It is all Thou. Not I, but Thou. So, this truth finds mention in the *Gītā* here. Up till now it did not come. In the thirty-third verse of the eleventh chapter, Śrī Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna after showing His Divine Form, *tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva jitvā śatrūn bhuṅkṣva rājyam samṛddham,* 'stand up Arjuna, overcome your enemies, enjoy life in this beautiful country of yours.' That was the language He used there. Now He is going to sing another tune: 'Not you, but the Divine that is within you.' As if one has no power or freedom at all. We *have* freedom, a limited freedom. Sri Ramakrishna tries to explain it with a beautiful illustration. A calf is tethered to a peg with a 30 feet rope.

Now that calf has the freedom to graze all grass within that 30 feet radius; absolute freedom is there, but beyond that it cannot go, until the cowherd comes and lengthens the rope, or changes the location. Similarly, all of us have freedom; a limited freedom. Beyond that we have no freedom. Only the power behind the universe, God Himself, changes the position and all these measures of freedom. So, that is the truth that slowly shines on thinking minds. There is some power behind this personality and this objective universe. This is the understanding Arjuna is being given just now. Now we are coming to the consummation of this teaching that manliness and strength, courage and character efficiency, all these will lead to a profound experience—complete self-surrender. That is a tremendous experience. In Sanskrit, we call it *śaraṇāgati*—'Not I, but Thou'. Thou alone art, and I am just Your child and nothing else. We become like a child before the Divine. After all, what can a child do in the house? Only the parents can do for the child.

That is how the English poet, Tennyson, sang about the mystery of life:

> But what am I an infant crying in the night,
> an infant crying for the light,
> and with no language but a cry!

When great saints, great sages, took to spirituality, they understood this truth—that the Divine is not far away. The Lord dwells *in the heart of all of us*. So, the next verse conveys this final message:

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत।
तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम्॥६२॥

Tameva śaraṇam gaccha sarvabhāvena bhārata;
Tatprasādāt parām śāntim sthānam prāpsyasi śāśvatam—18. 62

'Take refuge in Him alone with all your heart, O Bhārata; by His grace you shall attain supreme peace (and) the eternal abode.'

Tameva śaraṇam gaccha, 'take refuge in Him alone'; how?, *sarvabhāvena bhārata,* 'from every point of view, O Bhārata'; no reservation at all on this question. Everything is He, and He alone. Not I, Not I, Not I. What a wonderful teaching! Take any Christian, or Buddhist,

or Islamic teaching, or our own teaching, and you will find everywhere that the final teaching is *complete resignation to the Divine.* I am nothing, He is everything. And a human being becomes truly free only from that surrender. The little I has disappeared; the Lord alone is. In Advaita, it is this knowledge: this Atman becomes one with Brahman. There separation is not there at all. But for a devotee, for a *bhakta,* it is a tremendous experience. We begin with 'I', 'I'; then finally comes, 'the knocking away of this "I"; only the Lord is, and nothing else.' Then all suffering and troubles end with that realization.

So, *tam eva śaraṇam gaccha*, 'take refuge in Him alone'*; sarvabhāvena,* 'from every point of view'. That kind of complete resignation, from various points of view, is taught in all high spiritual teachings. And people have realized this truth also.

Tatprasādāt, 'through His grace'; *prāpsyasi,* 'you will get'; *parām śāntim,* 'supreme peace'; and *sthānam,* 'high status' as a free person—freedom through self-surrender. *Śāśvatam,* 'eternal' status. We lose nothing; this one is permanent status—ever free, with no more of bondage—that is the type of self-surrender or resignation. To whom?, we surrender to our own highest Self, the infinite Self that is within us and within all. From That we came, we played our own part a little, and we go back to that same Reality. Now we have become ourselves, in the true sense of the term.

Somebody asked Sri Ramakrishna, 'when shall I be free?' And he straightaway answered, 'when *I* shall cease to be'. In Bengali the question was: '*Ámi kobe mukta hobo*?' And the answer was: '*Ámi morle guchibe jānjāl*'. When 'I' ceases to be, it will be *mukti.* What a wonderful idea!

This is a very great subject. I have dealt with it in a very detailed way in my little book, *Divine Grace.* We start our life with personal effort. Then we come to personal assertion expressed as, 'I', 'I', 'I', and we do all things. Finally, we learn that it is 'not I, not I, not I, but, only He, He, and nothing else is there.' That is the last language of spiritual life. So, that is the nature of Divine Grace. There we are entirely under the inspiration of Divine Grace. Lord alone is; nothing else is there. Some of the most beautiful verses deal with this experience of total self-surrender. The 'I' completely vanishes as it were. That is a high state. But all can attain that

high state when this long march of human evolution finds its consummation.

We have a will. We fight with the world and try to establish our hegemony over this world with this will. And a time comes when we realize that this will is meant to be surrendered to that supreme Will. This not only comes in mystical literature of the world religions, but also in German, English and other literature. In English poetry we find this wonderful statement: 'Our wills are ours; we know not how our will are ours to make them Thine'. That is a wonderful and mature understanding. This is the last music in the *Gītā.* This will be repeated a little more forcefully two or three verses later.

In the next verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself is telling Arjuna, 'I have done My work, I have given you My best. You are free to accept it or to reject it'. That is a wonderful way of teaching where there is a responsible feeling in the student. He or she is not made a creature; he or she can decide for himself or herself. The best teachers are of this nature. They don't take away the freedom of the student. They give freedom to the student to select, and to accept or to reject:

इति ते ज्ञानमाख्यातं गुह्याद् गुह्यतरं मया।
विमृश्यैतदशेषेण यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु॥६३॥

Iti te jñānam ākhyātam guhyāt guhyataram mayā;
Vimṛśyaitad aśeṣeṇa yathecchasi tathā kuru — 18. 63

'Thus has wisdom, more profound than all profundities, been declared to you by Me; reflecting over it fully, act as you like.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling, 'Arjuna, I have communicated to you *jñānam.*' It actually means philosophy, wisdom. The English word philosophy also means wisdom. Sophia means wisdom. I have communicated to you the Lamp of Knowledge with which you can find your way. That is the nature of *jñāna.* In *ajñāna* or ignorance, we commit blunders. In darkness, we fall into pits. If there is *jñāna* or light, we don't fall into any pit. And so, what we seek is *jñāna,* 'the Light of Knowledge', *jñāna ālokam. Iti te jñānam ākhyātam guhyāt guhyataram mayā,* 'I have communicated to you the

profoundest of all knowledge.' *Guhya* means 'highly profound, deep'; this is extremely deep, deeper than the deep, or the deepest, as we say.

Vimṛśyaitad aśeṣeṇa yathecchasi tathā kuru. Here comes the great teacher's mind. 'Try to think over what I said and decide *for yourself* your course of action.' The teacher does not dictate what the student should do. A good teacher can tell you what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false, and make your mind grasp these ideas. Then it is left to you to take your own decisions. There is no compulsion. So, that is real philosophy—no kind of sermonising, or forcing people to accept a code of conduct. Highly cultured people need only a little understanding of things. They know how to decide for themselves. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses this wonderful expression: 'as you think proper, you do.'

So, here we have the idea of teaching at the highest level of Indian spiritual education. A teacher will, first of all, not teach unless somebody asks for it. Simple gratis advice is not given in spiritual life. We must ask for it. We must seek it. Otherwise, it has no value. So, here in this verse we can see this idea, and in the seventh verse of the second chapter we see the counterpart: there Arjuna is telling Śrī Kṛṣṇa, 'Please throw some light on my problem. I want Your help. I want Your guidance. I am Your student.' He says *kārpaṇya doṣopahata svabhāvaḥ*, 'I have become confused or broken down by narrow attachments and aversions'; and *dharmasammūḍhacetāḥ,* 'my mind is confused as to what is my duty'; and therefore, *pṛcchāmi tvām,* 'I ask you, Kṛṣṇa' for guidance in this matter. Please think about what is really good for me and advise me, *yacchreyaḥ syāt niścitam brūhi tanme,* 'what You think is good for me, decide it and tell me.' Then comes the last expression, *śiṣyaste'ham śādhi mām tvām prapannam,* 'I am Your student, Your disciple. Teach me who has taken refuge in Your superior Wisdom.' My wisdom is failing me here. Your superior wisdom will help me. Please teach me.

That verse (2. 7) is the beginning of the *Gītā* teaching. There are six verses even before that particular verse. And all the verses of the first chapter are also *Gītā.* But the actual teaching portion begins only from that seventh verse of the second chapter. A teacher begins to teach only when he or she finds the student prepared to listen and accept. That is why in all

Indian spiritual tradition, we find that when one goes to the teacher, he or she does not talk about these great matters. Unless we are serious about it, and unless we put a question and wait for an answer, the teacher will talk about the weather and such other matters. That is all.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* is a masterly Upaniṣad, and Śaṅkarācārya's commentary on it is also masterly. There Śaṅkarācārya says, *śāstram jñāpakam na tu kārakam,* '*Śāstra* or science, is only informative, not forcing you to do.' It is not *kārakam;* it merely says: this is the truth and you try to live it according to your own inclination. Modern science will say: this is the nature of health; such foods will give you health, and such foods will not give you health. That is *jñāpakam.* But, science does not force you to take this or that food. It is up to you. So, all knowledge is *jñāpakam* only. Information gives you knowledge about a subject; then, your impulse will convert it into action—good, bad, or indifferent. It all depends on your own mental state. So, here Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives that freedom to the student to deal with the communicated knowledge in the way the student desires or thinks proper. That is the meaning of this great verse.

सर्वगुह्यतमं भूयः शृणु मे परमं वचः।
इष्टोऽसि मे दृढमिति ततो वक्ष्यामि ते हितम्॥६४॥

Sarvaguhyatamam bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramam vacaḥ;
Iṣṭo'si me dṛḍhamiti tato vakṣyāmi te hitam —18. 64

'Hear again My supreme word, the profoundest of all; because you are My deeply beloved one, therefore, will I speak to you what is good.'

Now, I am communicating to you the most supreme mystery or truth, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Till now it was *sarvaguhyataram*; now it is *sarvaguhyatamam. Taram* is comparative and *tamam* is superlative. *Guhyatamam* means supremely mysterious or profound. *Śṛṇu me paramam vacaḥ,* 'listen to My supreme word;' *iṣṭo'si me dṛḍhamiti tato vakṣyāmi te hitam,* 'you are very dear to Me, and therefore, I am speaking what is good for you.'

In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* there is mention of a distinction made between what is *preya* or 'pleasant', and what is *śreya* or 'beneficial'. Everything

that is pleasant may not be beneficial. So, there is a difference between what is *hitam* and what is *priyam. Śreyaḥ* means 'what will lead us to high development in our life'. *Preyaḥ* means 'what is pleasant', what is attractive, what is stimulating, what is scintillating, etc. So, we must never run after what is *preyaḥ,* but run after what is *śreyaḥ,* what is eventually beneficial to us. Here, in the *Gītā,* the word *hitam* is used which means 'what is to our utmost welfare'. *Iṣṭo'si me*, 'you are My dearly beloved one'; I am interested in you. And therefore, *vakṣyāmi te hitam*, 'I speak what is good for you'. That supreme statement comes in the next two verses.

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे॥६५॥

Manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī mām namaskuru;
Māmevaiṣyasi satyam te pratijāne priyo'si me — 18. 65

'Occupy your mind with Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me, bow down to Me. You shall then reach Me only; truly do I promise unto you, (for) you are dear to Me.'

God Himself is speaking to a human being. This is a beautiful dialogue of God with a human being called Arjuna. That is the *Bhagavad Gītā,* Song of God, or *Song Celestial. Manmanā bhava,* 'let your mind be yoked to Me', the Lord; *madbhakto,* 'become My devotee'; let the Lord be the pure object of your love. Everything else is secondary and God is primary. *Madyājī,* 'whatever sacrifices and rites you perform, keep Me as the supreme goal'; *mām namaskuru,* 'salute Me'; just like a child salutes its father or mother, similarly, we must salute the supreme Divine Force in the world, i.e. God Himself. *Mām eva eṣyasi,* 'then you will achieve Me only'; *satyam te pratijāne,* 'I make this promise to you'; that is the language. Why?, *priyo'si me,* 'because you are dear to Me.' I am not here to misguide you. I am your Friend. The friend is defined in English as one who will do only what is good for you. He or she will take away all the dust from your body with a piece of cloth, without giving you any pain, and do only what is good for you, what is conducive to your welfare. And here Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells,

‘you are very dear to Me.’ So, I will tell you only what is really good for you. ‘Now, listen to Me’, this is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa says.

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः॥६६॥

Sarvadharmān parityajya māmekam śaraṇam vraja;
Aham tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ — 18. 66

‘Relinquishing all *dharmas* take refuge in Me alone; I will liberate you from all sins; grieve not.’

This verse is the conclusion of the spiritual message of the *Gītā.* When we become ripe enough to understand this last teaching, then that teaching has a tremendous significance. If it had been told in the second chapter, Arjuna, and we all, would not have understood it at all. We have to first build up our manhood (human-hood), our strength, our character. And then, we can listen to this and understand it. Having said in the beginning that you become strong, become full of energy, it is said finally, renounce all that and surrender yourself to Me. That strength to renounce all, one can get only at that mature stage. We don’t have that strength in the earlier stages. *The strength that makes us surrender is a superior strength. We build up that strength in the course of all our struggles in this world to find a place for our own existence.* That is the earlier struggle, and it consummates in this final struggle: take away all ‘I’ from there; everything remains, only the ‘I’ has gone away. Then, only Thou remains there. This is what is called the *carama śloka*—the finale, the ultimate wisdom of spiritual life.

Sarvadharmān parityajya, ‘renouncing all *dharmas*’; *māmekam śaraṇam vraja,* ‘take refuge in Me alone’; *aham tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi,* ‘I shall save you from all sins’; even virtues are included here, in the word ‘sins’. All these relative attitudes of sin and virtue will be transcended in this supreme act of self-surrender. *Mā śucaḥ,* ‘do not grieve’. Have no cause for grieving, sorrow, or any such thing. This message, ‘grieve not’, is added to the assurance given by God to save His devotee from sin and virtue. Śaṅkarācārya says *dharma* means the dualities—*dharma* as well as *adharma.* Both are to be transcended. Sri Ramakrishna

speaks of dealing with *dharma* and *adharma. Dharma* is needed to get rid of *adharma.* Then, we throw away *dharma* also. Sri Ramakrishna gives the example of a thorn pricking our feet. We take another thorn and remove the first thorn; and then throw away the second thorn also because its work is over. So, *dharma* is there to overcome *adharma*; and then we throw away *dharma* also. In the highest plane of realization, there is no distinction of the *dharma-adharma* attitudes. We don't live in that plane of duality. We live in the plane of pure spiritual awareness. From Him the world has come, and we return unto Him. For the world, it will take millions of years. But you and I can achieve it in this very life. It is a spiritual realization. Have complete surrender to the Divine. *From the One, the world has come; into the One (into Me), the world is now merging.* We realize our own infinite oneness with that supreme Reality. We know that the whole world has come from Brahman. It will go back to Brahman at the time of dissolution. That will be ages and ages later. But in spiritual life, a human being has the organic capacity to attain *now and here* what the cosmos takes millions of years. That takes place through spiritual knowledge. The knowledge is: everything *is* Brahman. There is nothing but Brahman. When I realize that truth, my *pralaya* or dissolution has already come. I have resolved the whole world into the Divine. There is nothing separate here. Wherever I look, I will see nothing but the Divine; He is present everywhere. The *jñāni* of this nature has a flood of illumination. In the beginning of our knowledge, our illumination is only like a candle light. But this is a tremendous illumination; illumination all-around. That is called the realization of that primordial ultimate Reality. In this very life, all separateness vanishes there.

So, both *dharma* and *adharma* are thrown away. How many times do we utter the word *śaraṇam*, 'self surrender', in our *bhajans*! Some devotees will say, *swāmiye śaraṇam aiyappa,* 'I take refuge in Swami Ayyappa'—a wonderful idea. Some will say, 'I take refuge in Śiva'. According to the conception of the Divine that one has, one repeats, 'I take refuge in that aspect of the Divine'. The Christian does it, the Muslim does it; the Buddhist does it when the devotee says, *Dhamam śaraṇam gacchāmi, Buddham śaraṇam gacchāmi, Sangham śaraṇam gacchāmi.* Every Buddhist becomes a Buddhist by saying this. So, in all spiritual literature

there is such a thing as an individual soul finding his or her consummation in that supreme Reality. That stage is being mentioned in this part of the *Gītā*. We have finished our struggles, we have become ripe enough to undertake this final step in spiritual life. I have got enough strength to take away all my individuality and my strength from me; it all belongs to the Lord; the Lord alone is.

To earn money if we need great strength, to renounce money we need greater strength. To develop character strength we need lot of energy. But to renounce this 'I' at the feet of the Divine, we need supreme energy. That is called the greatest strength. Surrender to the Lord is the result of supreme strength. In normal life, we do not see surrender of that nature; when we are weak, we surrender. In any battle, we never surrender when we are strong. We surrender only when we are weak. Whole armies will surrender, like the Pakistani Army in Dacca surrendering completely in 1971 because there was no other way. But, in spiritual life, we surrender only when we are supremely strong. *It is not the surrender of the weak, but the surrender of the strong.* What a beautiful idea! Swami Vivekananda, who possessed tremendous vigour, tremendous intellectual strength, did wonderful work in the East and in the West. But when he spoke in Madras in 1897 on the 'Sages of India', he ended by saying (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. 3, p. 268):

'Let me now only mention the great Sri Ramakrishna, the fulfilment of the Indian sages, the sage for the time, one whose teaching is just now, in the present time, most beneficial. And mark the divine power working behind the man. …

'Let me say now that if I have told you one word of truth, it was his and his alone, and if I have told you many things which were not true, which were not correct, which were not beneficial to the human race, they were all mine, and on me is the responsibility.'

That kind of surrender—whatever is good has come from him, and whatever is bad has come from me—is something extraordinary. This comes not from weakness, but from strength. Fullness makes for surrender; emptiness cannot make for surrender. So, this is the wonderful idea we must remember when we use the word 'surrender'. Surrender is always bad in

ordinary human life. ‘Fight your way’, is what we say in normal life. Quite correct. But at this highest stage in spiritual life, ‘surrender’ is the supreme word. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa sings that note in this great music of the *Gītā* at this stage.

Tagore in his famous book *Gītānjali*, refers to the prayer for strength in a series of lines: ‘Give me the strength never to disown the poor, or bend my knees before insolent might.’ Likewise, so many beautiful words come: ‘Give me the strength to lift my mind above the daily trifles.’ These are beautiful words in the *Gītānjali.* And the last line is more beautiful: ‘And give me the strength to surrender my strength to Thy Will with love.’ That is the superior strength. How much strength does one need to surrender like this! That is why it is so different from ordinary worldly experience. It is something profound in spiritual life. Some of the greatest saints and sages, at the last moment when they were fully strong, surrendered everything to the Highest—‘not I, but Thou’; that language we find again and again. Grief and delusion had afflicted Arjuna’s mind. And all of us too have many occasions of grief and delusion. Sometimes, a creative type of grief and delusion possesses us, and that takes us to a higher life. That doesn’t happen every time. But sometimes it happens. A particular grief, a particular delusion, makes us search for higher values. And then our new life begins there. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna who had all this grief till now: ‘Now you can give up your grief. I am here to protect you from all this. Have no more grief hereafter. Be peaceful. With a peaceful mind look to your work, your own responsibilities. Live your life as you used to live, but with a new wisdom behind that life.’

Philosophy is what imparts wisdom to human life. Textbook philosophy does not do that, but a deeper vision of truth is what gives to philosophy its high value. With that philosophy one can find one’s way in life. It is like a lamp which throws light on our path and shows us the way. This idea has been repeatedly expressed in our literature. The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* one of the greatest books on *bhakti* among any literature in the world, describes the help that a devotee gets from spiritual life to be like a lamp which lights up his or her way towards the Divine. *Adhyātma dīpam*, ‘the spiritual lamp’, that is how it is described. The whole of the *Bhāgavatam* is the *adhyātma dīpam* lit by the great sage Śuka, the son of Vyāsa. So, the whole of that

Bhāgavatam contains that light from the lamp, a light unto our souls, a lamp unto our feet. This idea is given in a spiritual teaching where *Bhāgavatam* is compared to that *adhyātma dīpam* (*Bhāgavatam*, I. ii. 3)

Yaḥ svānubhāvam akhila śruti sāram ekam
adhyātma dīpam ati titīrṣatām tamo'ndham ;
Samsāriṇām karuṇayā''ha purāṇa guhyam
Tam vyāsasūnum upayāmi gurum munīnām —

'This great *Purāṇa,* the profound *śāstra,* the *Bhāgavatam,* was conveyed by the great sage known as Śuka.' How did he get it?, 'from his own experience', *yaḥ svānubhāvam;* he experienced the truth that he is communicating here. *Akhila śruti sāram,* this scripture is 'the essence of all the *śrutis*'; and *ekam adhyātma dīpam,* 'a single spiritual lamp', created by his experiences, is being offered. To whom?, *samsāriṇām,* 'to those who live in the *samsāra*', who see darkness, grief, delusion afflicting human life. They are in search of a lamp to find their way. He calls out to them, 'Come, I will give you a lamp by which you can find your way.' What was his motive in doing that?, compassion; *karuṇayā''ha,* 'he spoke out of compassion'; not for making money, or for getting name and fame out of it. It was an act of pure compassion. *Purāṇaguhyam*, 'this supreme *Purāṇa*'; *tam vyāsa sūnum upayāmi gurum munīnām,* 'I take refuge in him, Śuka, the teacher of sages, and the son of Vyāsa.'

This is what that verse says in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.* Religious teaching will be valuable only if it comes from experience, not from academic achievement. Academic pursuit has a value, but not in this field of spiritual guidance. Here, only spiritual experience has a value. Whatever the *Śruti* teaches is the product of experience. We can also experience it in our own life. So, *Śruti* only confirms our own experience. And our own experience confirms what the *Śruti* says. Therefore, we do not depend upon the *Śruti;* we depend upon our own experience, and take the help of the *Śruti* to achieve that experience.

This is how Śrī Kṛṣṇa has lit up this lamp of *jñāna.* He is offering it to people saying, 'here is the light and you may use it'. But who wants it?, those who are not happy with darkness. Those who are happy with darkness, do not seek light at all. They are happy to be in the dark. 'We

shall enjoy darkness', they say, and do not seek light. But those who are living in darkness, and are not happy with it, they want some light. 'Give us light! Give us light!,' they say. That struggle for light is there. One can have a torch light, or very luminous bulbs in the room; but these lights are of no use to remove that darkness of which we are speaking. What is needed is the Light of the Soul, which is *jñānam*. *Jñāna* alone can guide us in that path-finding by which we will reach the end of our journey.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving that kind of a light to Arjuna, and, through Arjuna, to all of us. *Arjunam nimittīkṛtya*, 'making Arjuna the medium', is what we studied in Śaṅkarācārya's introduction to this *Gītā*. Millions of people are getting that light which Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave to Arjuna thousands of years ago.

In Rāmānujācārya's commentary, this verse is treated as supremely significant. This *Śaraṇāgati* is a wonderful teaching for him. He has written a book on *śaraṇāgati, Śaraṇāgati-gadya,* and the whole of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava Movement in south India is based upon this concept of *śaraṇāgati.* Hanumān had *śaraṇāgati.* Vibhīṣaṇa took refuge at the feet of Rāma. In *Rāmāyaṇa* we find all these things. And the Lord has said there, 'those who come and take refuge in Me, I protect them, I save them'. Rāma's own words are there in the *Rāmāyaṇa.* We find plenty of this sentiment in the Christian mystical literature also.

Now, a few words are being uttered by Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is a profound subject, *jñāna.* Who can use this with profit?, those who are ripe for it. Everybody cannot understand its value. Those who are spiritual seekers, not at all satisfied with the humdrum life of everyday, they alone can appreciate this teaching and benefit from it. Giving it to others is a waste of effort. It is meaningless. And this is told in every spiritual tradition. Here also, Śrī Kṛṣṇa refers to this in the next verse:

इदं ते नातपस्काय नाभक्ताय कदाचन।
न चाशुश्रूषवे वाच्यं न च मां योऽभ्यसूयति॥६७॥

Idam te nātapaskāya nābhaktāya kadācana;
Na ca aśuśrūṣave vācyam na ca mām yo'bhyasūyati—18. 67

‘This is never to be taught by you to one who is devoid of austerities or devotion, nor to one who does not render service, nor to one who cavils at Me.’

Idam te na atapaskāya vācyam, ‘this teaching should not be given to anyone who has not done any spiritual struggle’*; na abhaktāya kadācana,* ‘never to one who is not a devotee of the Divine’; *na ca aśuśrūṣave*, this is never to be communicated ‘to one who does not render service’*;* and *na ca mām yo abhyasūyati,* ‘nor to one who cavils at Me’, i.e. not to one who sarcastically criticises the Divine. Such minds cannot profit from this teaching. It is better not to communicate it to such people because it will only be mental pain for us. So, in all spiritual teachings we find that this restriction is given. Even in physical science, what is the use of teaching mathematics to one who has no knowledge at all, or has no interest at all in that subject? We waste our energy thereby; that is all. There must be some understanding and some desire to understand more. Then all the teaching can be given. In spiritual matter, it is just the same, but more so.

A little bit of austerity and self-control is needed to know the truth lying above the sensory level. This is a truth about God who is above the sensory level. Unless we control the senses a little, we cannot understand this truth. Therefore, *tapasya* is God. Every effort to discipline the sensory human being is *tapas*, and not any wild austerity. When we live in society, we must restrain ourself so that we don’t trespass into other people. That kind of *tapas* of ordinary restraint must be there in human life. Self-restraint versus police restraint. There is no morality in police restraint. When we are able to restrain ourself, that is morality; that is being spiritual. So, *tapas* deals with this subject: training of the mind in taking one’s awareness high when dealing with other people, to establish happy relations with other people, and not confronting them, not jamming into them. That is *ādhyātmika vikāśa*, spiritual growth or expansion.

Let us take the *Mahābhārata.* In the conversation between Tulādhāra and Jājali, we have one of the most beautiful episodes of the great epic (*Mahābhārata*, XII. 254. 9). Jājali was a *brāhmaṇa* ascetic. Tulādhāra was a business man. And this Tulādhāra is advising Jājali on what is spiritual life. It is a reverse situation than what one would expect. Generally, *brāhmaṇas*

used to teach. But there are occasions in the *Mahābhārata,* where the teacher of religion is a non-*brāhmin*—may be a *vaiśya* or a business person, or a *śūdra.* It could be anybody, but the highest teaching comes from such people. That is what is recorded in that Tulādhāra-Jājali *samvāda* in the *Śānti Parva.* There Tulādhāra asks the ascetic Jājali: 'what are these rituals and ceremonies that you want to do? What is there even in that *tapasya* that you do standing on one leg? The main thing is to try to serve people with your body, mind and spirit. Make others happier and happier. That is real *dharma.*' That *śloka* is very famous.

Sarveṣām yaḥ suhṛn nityam sarveṣām ca hite rataḥ;
Karmaṇā manasā vācā sa dharmam veda jājale —

'Oh Jājali! That person understands what is *dharma*', *saḥ dharmam veda jājale;* who is that person?, *sarveṣām yaḥ suhṛn nityam,* 'who is the friend of all beings always'; *sarveṣām ca hite rataḥ,* 'ever engaged in the welfare and happiness of all people'; how?, *karmaṇā manasā vācā,* 'through action, through thought, and through speech'. If a single word can bring good to somebody, why not say that? If just a little service makes someone happy, why not do that? This person has understood the truth.

What does *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* say? *Manasaśca indriyāṇām ca haikāgryam paramam tapaḥ,* 'the concentration of the energies of the senses and the mind is called supreme *tapas*'. Anyone can quote it in any university in this world. Everybody will look up to it; it is a wonderful definition. All achievements come to us through that concentration. The sensory energies are scattered about. When we concentrate them, we achieve success. Mind's energies are scattered. We concentrate them; then we achieve success in making money, in getting knowledge, in obtaining a degree, in doing great work for society, in achieving political elevation. All this comes from *tapas,* by intelligent hard work. *Tajjyāyaḥ sarva dharmebhyaḥ*, 'that is the supreme *dharma* among all the *dharmas*' by which we concentrate the energies given to us in the body, the mind, and the senses, and direct that energy to the problems in front of us. *Sa dharmaḥ para ucyate*, 'that *dharma* is known to be supreme'. That is called *tapas.*

In every department *tapas* has a tremendous part to play. No greatness is achieved without having *tapas* behind it. Any type of greatness—worldly

greatness, moral greatness, artistic greatness, scientific greatness, and spiritual greatness—requires *tapas.* We have seen that in plenty in history—whether it is Western history or our own history. All people who made a mark in history have done a lot of *tapas.* How much of greatness came to Britain during the 16th to 19th centuries! How?, through hard *tapas,* hard concentrated work in the universities, colleges and research institutions, and industrial undertakings. People did that and so they built up their culture and civilization. America did the same thing—tremendous hard work. Indian sages and seers did that earlier. They built up a wonderful civilization here.

It is only after our political independence that we have forgotten the word *tapas* in every department of life, except in making one's own money by every crooked means possible. That is all what we have understood now. That *tapas* of the past must come back. Our education will become wonderful when that *tapas* enters into it. Our politics will become wonderful when *tapas* enters into it. Today, one becomes a political leader if he or she shouts about and goes round throwing stones. There is no difficulty at all. And so, the *Gītā* provides a comprehensive and profound philosophy of life and work. It can be appreciated only by those who have entered that phase of *tapas* where some training of the sensory and mental energies have been undertaken. Then if he or she looks up to the *Gītā,* he or she will get some blessing, some message from this great book. So the verse says, *na atapaskāya vācyam,* 'don't communicate this truth to one who has not done any *tapas.*'

Na abhaktāya, and also not to 'one who has no sense of love inside'. Sri Ramakrishna asked a young man, 'do you love anybody, father, mother, sister or any other person?' 'I love nobody', he replied. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'What a dry fellow you are!' Love somebody in the world. That is very necessary. Even love well your wife or your husband. That is a wonderful thing. We should have some love; we can expand it later on. We have no capital at all. What will come out of us? So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, a little love of God who dwells in the heart of all is needed. We can make it wider and wider later on. We should have something other than our little ego. We must love somebody else. What a wonderful idea! All expansion comes from that wonderful development—love of something other than ourself.

We all have self love. Even a little child is full of self love. We should love someone other than ourself. Then that love can be multiplied, made infinite, and this great stage of *bhakti* will come out of that. And so, *bhakti yoga* is meant for people who have at least one little ounce of love in their hearts. Even if it be worldly love, it does not matter.

Na ca aśuśrūṣave, this teaching should not be given 'to one who does not render some service to others'. *Śuśrūṣa* is the word for 'service'. When we take the first step in spiritual life, we develop this attitude of service. Arrogant people cannot understand this philosophy. A little spirit of service must be there: 'I am here to serve you. I am here to help you.' What a beautiful attitude of mind! That shows that we are not this tiny organism—limited, and separate from all others. We are something more which need not be limited by this body. We can feel oneness with other bodies also. With that awareness, we find our life expressed in its inter-human relations in the form of spirit of service. We are something more than ourself. That becomes the natural trait of a person when he or she rises above this body. This genetic system is limited; *why should my mind be limited?* It can be unlimited. With that knowledge comes that expansion of sympathy and understanding. And that spirit of service later becomes natural and spontaneous. We need not struggle for it.

'Unless we build ourselves above ourselves, how poor a thing is man', sang the English poet Wordsworth. We have to build a higher individuality above our given individuality. Let us build a larger self; that is something great for a human being. One who has not started building that higher personality on the given individuality is not fit to receive this *Gītā* message. He or she is still at the level of the ego. *Gītā* cannot be appreciated by such a person. First teach such a person how he or she can get this tendency to serve people. Teach how to express oneself in acts and modes of service. When a little spirit of service comes to a person, he or she will be able to say, 'I want to love people; I want to serve people. I want to go beyond the limitation of this ego.' The beginnings of an expansive attitude are seen in that person. Then he or she is fit for the *Gītā* message.

Similarly, *na ca mām yaḥ abhyasūyati,* this teaching should not be communicated to 'those who sarcastically make remark about Me and all

higher values.' God is the highest value, but even other values also are there. That kind of a cynical mind cannot understand the *Gītā* at all. So, it is better that the *Gītā* is not communicated to such a person. That cynical mind is a dead mind, absolutely uncreative.

य इमं परमं गुह्यं मद्भक्तेष्वभिधास्यति।
भक्तिं मयि परां कृत्वा मामेवैष्यत्यसंशय:॥६८॥

Ya imam paramam guhyam madbhakteṣu abhidhāsyati;
Bhaktim mayi parām kṛtvā mām eva eṣyati asamśayaḥ—18. 68

'One who, with supreme devotion to Me, will teach this deeply profound philosophy to My devotees, shall doubtless come to Me alone.'

Imam paramam guhyam, 'this supremely profound teaching', this great mystery; *guhyam* is translated as mystery. Not something mystical or magical, but something deep, and so it is a mystery. Prof. Max Müller, in one of his books, clarifies this word separating it from magic and mist. Do not consider the profound mysteries of religion as misty. Here unclear things are made clear. This is a profound truth, and hence *guhyam*. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses the word *paramam guhyam. Mad bhakteṣu yaḥ abhidhāsyati,* 'one who communicates this deep message among My devotees', who have, as I said, a little love in their hearts for something higher than mere organic satisfaction. *Bhaktim mayi parām kṛtvā,* such a one 'developing great *bhakti* or devotion towards Me;' *mām eva eṣyati asamśayaḥ,* 'attains to Me alone, without doubt.' There is no doubt about it; this is the way of *bhakti* development. A *bhakta* is a devotee who deals with other devotees through *bhakti.* He or she enhances their *bhakti* and one's own *bhakti* as well. In this way, there is a beautiful intercommunication between one devotee and another. They understand a common language. It is not the language of the tongue; it is the language of the soul, of the heart. Lovers understand the language of love. How can a dry mind understand the language of love? So, *bhaktas* can understand this wonderful language of pure love, pure *bhakti.* We begin with ordinary *bhakti,* and finally reach *parā-bhakti—bhaktim mayi parām kṛtvā.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa has discussed this supreme devotion in earlier chapters. Various stages of *bhakti* were mentioned. Through that supreme devotion *mām eva eṣyati,* 'he or she

comes unto Me only'; *na saṁśayaḥ,* 'there is no doubt' in this matter. That is how Śrī Kṛṣṇa is summing up the whole teaching by saying how this teaching must be communicated to the world.

It has done me good; let me share it with others; that is the attitude. Naturally, in society, there is this attitude of sharing. You have something worthwhile. You want to share it with others. If that person receives it, well and good; you have done your part, namely, sharing with others. That is all. In villages we find that if there is a good mango in someone's garden, he or she will send a few to the neighbours also. We have got a fine mango, let us share it. That is how they establish harmony between families. Similarly, you have a good idea. You read it in a book, and you tell it to others, 'This is what I read, and it is beautiful.' He or she replies, 'Is it so? Let me also understand it.' So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling about communication of this message. It is not only through radio or television, which is a very recent medium, that we communicate. *Every person is a centre of communication.* The subject of 'communication' is very important in the world; but we forget that we need not depend upon the television, radio, or the press media for all these things. Human beings communicate with each other. That communication must be for the good of all, for uplifting people. We can also communicate to bring down people. People often do that. But here we want to enhance human life by taking them on their own road to fulfilment. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells, 'those who spread among devotees this profound truth that I communicated to you, with supreme devotion to Me, they will come unto Me only, without doubt.'

Some more beautiful ideas on this subject of communication will come to us in one or two of the remaining verses. Truth needs to be communicated. How to communicate truth? We are all dealing with the subject of communication today. This modern civilization is full of information, communication, and problems related to these subjects. In the world of religion also there was this wonderful art of communication. Persons who communicate spiritual ideas are great; the next verse expresses this:

न च तस्मान्मनुष्येषु कश्चिन्मे प्रियकृत्तमः।
भविता न च मे तस्मादन्यः प्रियतरो भुवि॥६९॥

Na ca tasmāt manuṣyeṣu kaścinme priyakṛttamaḥ;
Bhavitā na ca me tasmāt anyaḥ priyataro bhuvi — 18. 69

'Therefore also, among human beings there is none who does dearer service to Me, nor shall there be another on earth dearer to Me than such a person.'

A person who does this kind of communication of high spiritual ideas—not dogmas and creeds—is dearest to Me, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Every teacher has said this. Śrī Kṛṣṇa said it; Buddha said it; Jesus said it. I have communicated to you the bread of life. Share it, share it, share it. That is the concept. 'Among all human beings, none is dearer to Me than one who communicates this life-giving message to other people', says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He or she is *priyataraḥ* to Me, 'extremely dear' to Me. This work of communicating healthy ideas is to be undertaken. Do not hold good ideas to yourself. Communicate them to others. There are other people waiting to receive it. We need not be aggressive, but we can be communicative; let there be less of gossip and more and more of such communication. That is the idea. In society communication is essential to establish harmony between its members. This is one such idea. Communicate to others the teaching of the *Gītā.* What is that teaching?, a teaching that makes for human happiness and welfare. There is nothing sectional, nothing communal, nothing limited. It is meant for the happiness and welfare of all people. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling, 'there is none dearer to Me on earth than such a person who communicates this message to others'. Ideas go from one character to another—gently. It is like one lamp lighting another lamp. That is what happens in healthy social life.

अध्येष्यते च य इमं धर्म्यं संवादमावयोः।
ज्ञानयज्ञेन तेनाहमिष्टः स्यामिति मे मतिः॥७०॥

Adhyeṣyate ca ya imam dharmyam samvādam āvayoḥ;
Jñānayajñena tenāham iṣṭaḥ syām iti me matiḥ — 18. 70

'And one who will study this dialogue of ours conducive to social stability and enrichment, by him or her shall I be worshipped by the *yajña* of knowledge; such is My conviction.'

Studying and spreading great ideas is a great *yajña* by itself. We call it *adhyayana* and *adhyāpana. Adhyayana* means 'study'. *Adhyāpana* means 'teaching'. Both must go side by side. From the Upaniṣads up to our own times, this idea has been expounded. *Svādhyāya pravacanābhyām na pramaditavyam* is a sentence in the convocation address in the first chapter of *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*; the Vice-Chancellor speaks to the students: 'don't forsake learning *and* teaching'. That is the idea. *Adhyeṣyate ca ya imam dharmyam samvādam āvayoḥ,* 'one who studies this dialogue between both of us—a dialogue which is *dharmyam*'; *jñānayajñena tenāham iṣṭaḥ syām iti me matiḥ,* 'by that person shall I be worshipped through the *yajñā* of knowledge'; that person becomes very dear to Me because he or she is engaged in *jñāna yajña*, a new type of *yajña.* We have seen many types of *yajñas* mentioned in earlier chapters in which this *jnāna yajna* had the highest place. This *jñāna yajña* is extraordinary, consisting of acquisition and diffusion of knowledge.

Let us have light, and more light. That is the attitude of one engaged in *jñāna yajña.* So, a nation which is dedicated to *jñāna,* and which performs *yajña* through *jñāna,* will rise to the top. There is no doubt at all regarding this. Knowledge alone can save us from this animal-like existence in the world. That knowledge must be cultivated. So, *jñāna yajña* means that devotion to the acquisition of knowledge. Research, study, discussion, all these belong to *jñāna yajña.* Tremendous development will come out of that. The whole of Indian culture has shown the importance of *jñāna yajña.* We had given the highest place to this *jñāna yajña.* The whole of modern Western civilization is based upon the strength of this *jñāna yajña.* Universities, colleges, and research centres are devoted to study and understanding, and that developed the Western nations. So, *jñāna yajña* is foundational to all cultures and civilizations.

'One who will study this sacred dialogue of ours, by him or by her shall I be worshipped by the *yajña* of knowledge', says Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has left a great thought; let me study it; that should be the attitude. India has a great concept in sociology and that is: every child is born with three debts, *ṛṇa*, as it is called in Sanskrit. *Ìṇa* means debt. The first debt is the genetic debt, *pitṛ ṛṇa*. This body owes its existence to its ancestors. It is coming as a genetic continuity. That is an important thing. We must recognize it. How

do we discharge it?, by leaving good healthy children to continue the genetic succession. We generally repay our debt to the ancestors through this genetic continuity. From the sages and saints of the Upaniṣads and Vedas till today, so many generations have come. One string of people coming. That is genetic heritage. But that is physical. Higher than this is *ṛṣi ṛṇa,* our debt to our great sages, to great thinkers. They have left us a fund of knowledge by their effort, by their study. How do we repay this debt?, by studying, by acquisition of the knowledge that they have left behind and by enhancing it; that is called *ṛṣi ṛṇa.* Going to school, studying whatever knowledge old and contemporary thinkers have given to us, expanding it and leaving it richer for the next generation. That is how we discharge *ṛṣi ṛṇa,* our debt to the sages. Till now we had only Indian sages and thinkers to repay our debt. But today, we have our debt to all the sages of the world. We are indebted to the Western sages, to the Eastern sages, and to our own sages. What wonderful things they have done! We have to acquire it. We have to understand it. That effort is something wonderful. That is true worship of the Divine. By discharging our debt to the ancient and modern thinkers and sages through this *jñāna yajña,* we become free. The third is *deva ṛṇa,* debt to the gods. That we do through various rituals and activities nourishing nature around. Creation of a healthy environment is another *ṛṇa* which we have not done well. Now we have to do it. Trees, plants, animals, rivers and lakes around us ought to be protected and to be looked after. Formerly, we called it *deva ṛṇa*, our debt to the gods through various methods. Today, we have extended this meaning to include all the above items as *deva ṛṇa.* We have to discharge it by protecting our environment. Elephants are being destroyed by poachers. We should fight against it. It is all part of this *ṛṇa.* We are destroying our whole life by destroying our environment. We should be aware of this debt and discharge it. Our old concept continues, but gets extended in meaning now. As I said about *ṛṣi ṛṇa,* we thought about our own *ṛṣis* only till now*;* but today, we extend it to include Western thinkers, thinkers from other countries also. So, in this way, these concepts are becoming extended world wide today. *Ìṇa* is the correct word. Everyone is indebted to the past. We must discharge that debt. Then only can we feel free. These are the three debts—a very central teaching in Indian sociology.

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling in this verse about *jñāna yajña,* study of great thoughts. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself has given a great piece of thought here. We study it, and thus we worship Him through *jñāna yajña.* That itself is worship. Study of the *Gītā,* and trying to live it, is the worship of the Divine. 'Whoever hears Me and will not practise it, I do not accept his or her position', Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said. Jesus also has said this: one who hears it, but doesn't practise it, that foolish person is like one who built his house on sand, and the rains came and the house fell. That is a wonderful parable in the *New Testament*; but the wise man heard Jesus, and implemented the teachings. He is the one who built his house on rock. It could stand against rain, thunder, and cyclone. Now, that is the example Jesus gives. Śrī Kṛṣṇa also said the same thing in the last verse of the twelfth chapter. So, worshipping the Divine need not always be through a picture or through a ritual. Trying to understand what He has said, trying to live what He said, is real worship. We have to learn that idea of worship much more in India, because the very idea of worship brings to the mind some ceremony, some ritual. That is not so. The word *upāsanā* comes in the Upaniṣads, in the Vedas. The word worship always has this high meaning: trying to understand that particular thought, and trying to live it. All that is *upāsanā.*

Adhyeṣyate ca ya imam dharmyam samvādam, 'one who studies this dialogue which is *dharmyam*'*;* this teaching is *dharmyam,* making for social stability and enrichment. *Dharma* is whatever improves the quality of society. What is conducive to *dharma* is *dharmyam.* This teaching is *dharmyam.* A healthy social order will come out of this teaching. What India and the whole world is seeking today is a philosophy that can respond to the aspirations of the people in all parts of the world. We need that philosophy. The *Gītā* philosophy is the best candidate for it. It considers only human welfare, and nothing sectional, nothing parochial is there in its teaching. That is why it *is* appealing to the minds of people all over the world.

I like that word *yajña* in connection with knowledge. A student is studying. What is he or she doing?, *jñāna yajña.* What a beautiful idea! We study philosophy, we study physical sciences, study medicine, study engineering, study any one of these with the correct attitude, and it is *jñāna yajña.* But when we study with the idea of making it a means of filling the

belly only, or for getting a job of high salary, it is not *jñāna yajña.* That feeding of the belly is only a bye-product. Knowledge itself is the goal. We have to use that knowledge also for raising our life to a higher level.

श्रद्धावाननसूयश्च शृणुयादपि यो नरः।
सोऽपि मुक्तः शुभाँल्लोकान्प्राप्नुयात्पुण्यकर्मणाम्॥७१॥

Śraddhāvān anasūyaśca śṛṇuyādapi yo naraḥ;
So'pi muktaḥ śubhāmllokān prāpnuyāt puṇyakarmaṇām—18. 71

'And even that person who hears this, full of *śraddhā* and free from malice, he or she too, liberated, shall attain to the happy worlds of those of righteous deeds.'

'A man and woman who listens to this teaching', *śṛṇuyādapi yo naraḥ;* somebody is expounding and one simply hears it. *Śraddhāvān*, who is 'full of *śraddhā*'; *anasūyaśca*, 'and free from malice'*;* free from negative ideas; *so'pi muktaḥ,* 'he or she too will be liberated' from all sins; *śubhāmllokān prāpnuyāt puṇyakarmaṇām,* 'and shall attain happy worlds of the righteous,' achieve the highest level of righteousness in this very life. This is the promise to the listeners. Both the speaker *and* the listener are blessed when the subject is so great and so noble. In fact, even if we take up a scientific subject like health, and when somebody speaks about it and when we listen, it is so beneficial to all of us. So sacred is the whole subject. Which knowledge is not sacred! Everything has that kind of validity in enhancing human life. So, when we speak on the spiritual life, on higher spiritual experiences, or, talk about the human body and its functioning, it is a profound mystery.

There is a book in our library; I call it the Veda of the body. It is a *Reader's Digest* publication. Each part of the body is discussed there. Wonderful language is used. The first lesson is 'I am your thyroid'. And the thyroid is telling what it is going to do to us. So, we know all about the thyroid by reading that. 'I am your stomach' tells us all about our stomach. So also, we learn about our nervous system. The whole book is full of this subject. When we read it, it is Veda—true knowledge by which our life will be lived better and better. In this way, when we listen to a lecture, it is

wonderful. Listening is as important as speaking. I appreciate it, I respond to it, I want to know more about it—that attitude is beautiful. That means the human life is rising to the mental level. As a child, one is at the physical level; only eating and comforts are the child's concern. The child is not interested in anything else. But after two or three years, a little awakening comes. The child wants knowledge. And we put the child through *vidyā-ārambha,* 'the initiation of the child in *akṣara abhyāsa*'. From that time onwards, the child is searching for knowledge and that continues. That is the wonderful nature of the human system; it can go on expanding its horizon of knowledge, understanding vaster and still vaster regions of reality. Thus *jñāna yajña* continues up to the end of life till we realize the infinite Atman, where knowledge consummates in the highest experience of the ultimate Reality. Brahma *jñāna* is the highest experience that anybody can have. Brahman stands for the totality of reality.

So, *śraddhāvān,* 'men and women with faith', with the attitude 'I am here in search of knowledge.' Every scientist must have *śraddhā.* Every religious aspirant must have *śraddhā.* Every search for knowledge must have *śraddhā* behind it. What is that *śraddhā*?, that there is a meaning in this striving for knowledge, that there is something to be known in nature, and that I am here to find it out. That is called *prior śraddhā* or faith in the pursuit which I am engaged in. A person without *śraddhā* will not pursue knowledge itself because he or she knows even earlier that there is nothing to pursue in this world! Then why another person becomes a scientific seeker?, because he or she knows surely that there is something. He or she has not seen it, but has faith in it. Therefore, he or she becomes a scientist. So also, in religion: there is something beyond this material universe. I have not seen it, but I know it is there. I am in search for it. He or she becomes a great spiritual aspirant. On both fronts, one needs this initial *śraddhā.* Without it we can't become a good scientist or spiritual aspirant at all. A certain person goes to fish in a lake. What is the *śraddhā* behind this?, 'I know there is fish in this lake. I have not caught even one, but I know they are there'. Suppose, that person knew there were no fish in the lake, would that person go to fish at all? That person won't, because he or she knows there are no fish. It will be mere waste of energy. So, *śraddhā* is essential.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said in an earlier chapter: *śraddhāvān labhate jñānam*, 'one endowed with *śraddhā* achieves knowledge', both physical and spiritual.

Anasūyaśca, he or she should not be cynical in mind. A cynical person cannot have any pursuit of knowledge. Why has our education suffered recently?, because our love of knowledge has disappeared. It has become minimal. That we can see when we see the attendance in University Extension lectures in the last twenty or thirty years, especially after the independence; they have lost all meaning. Hardly five or six persons will attend a meeting chaired by a distinguished person visiting that university. Students are not interested. Teachers are not interested. City people in some numbers will attend. It has happened several times in the University of Calcutta. A big distinguished speaker comes, but very few people go to listen him. Ultimately, I suggested to the Vice-Chancellor to organize the lectures in the Vivekananda Auditorium in our Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture. He did it, and two hundred to three hundred people attended the lecture. In that way it continued for some years because non-teachers and non-students used to attend. And I have seen in my early years in the University of Mysore—sixty years ago—that the whole hall used to be full. People used to come to listen to extension lectures. But, the whole thing has changed. There is no love of knowledge. No love for great thinkers and love to listen to them. A sense of self-satisfaction has come to students—I am full, I don't need anything more—that attitude. As soon as a student enters the University, he or she is already full, doesn't need anything more. That is all. I want a degree only. If you can give it to me in the beginning itself, before even the classes commence, then I don't even have to come to the University for two years.

That state of mind is ruinous to any society. All the greatness that we built up will be a past history. Current history will be very poor. That is why this *yajña* must come very soon in our education first. That understanding, I am sure, will come, and then we shall start a tremendous developmental work for the whole nation. What is needed is the mind-development; today that mind is not there. Body is there. Even with regard to education in American Universities, some of the magazines like *Time* used to carry articles about this *mindless* education. There is no mind at all in education. Mindless people receiving mindless education. We have got plenty of that

type in India. So, the behaviour also is mindless. Mind is not applied to the behaviour. All that will change when this particular fever for knowledge possesses us. The whole nation will be hungry for knowledge. People will flock to primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, and universities thirsting for knowledge. That is the foundation for every greatness for any society. Our history also says the same thing. Western history says the same thing. We have forgotten it; we have to recapture it once again. *Bhagavad Gītā* is the book that will help to inspire us in all these directions as well. Not only in developing character, in developing the spirit of service, but also in cultivating love for knowledge. Śrī Kṛṣṇa repeatedly mentions this: Knowledge is supreme; *vidyā* is supreme; *na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitram iha vidyate* (4. 38): 'there is nothing so purifying here as knowledge.' Washing soap, and washing powder are all purifying for the body and clothes. But human life is purified only by knowledge. This great hymn of knowledge, this wonderful pursuit of knowledge is highly commended. That kind of madness must come to the human mind in India. Such people also will rise higher and higher in spiritual life. In the light of Indian thought, this kind of secular education will slowly reach to the non-secular level. It is a continuous education. We don't stop at the secular level. On the way these are several stoppages—the primary section, the high school section, the college section, and the university section, etc. These are all small temporary stoppages on a bus route. Knowledge itself is not stopping there. We may stop at a particular level, but knowledge will continue. That attitude must come, so that after we finish all this education in the university, we continue our education in the inner field to understand our own true nature, to realize higher values in life. So, knowledge continues. That is why Sri Ramakrishna said in Bengali: *jato din bāmchi, tato din śikhi,* 'as long as I live, so long do I continue to acquire knowledge'. Today the UNESCO has given us that idea that knowledge must be lifelong, not necessarily institutional. Institutional knowledge is limited. After we finish graduation or post-graduation, we come away. No more of institutional knowledge, but life itself continues. That also must be geared to knowledge. It is called lifelong education, a beautiful concept we have in Vedanta and in modern thinking as well. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa is telling us in this section.

कच्चिदेतच्छ्रुतं पार्थ त्वयैकाग्रेण चेतसा।
कच्चिदज्ञानसंमोहः प्रनष्टस्ते धनञ्जय॥७२॥

Kaccit etacchṛutam pārtha tvayaikāgreṇa cetasā;
Kaccit ajñānasammohaḥ pranaṣṭaste dhanañjaya — 18. 72

'Has this been heard by you, O Pārtha, with an attentive mind? Has your delusion caused by ignorance been destroyed, O Dhanañjaya (Arjuna)?'

In this verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is directly asking Arjuna a question. *Kaccit etat śṛutam pārtha tvayā,* 'Arjuna, did you listen to Me', to all the talk that I gave just now*; ekāgreṇa cetasā,* 'with your one-pointed mind'. Similarly, *kaccit ajñānasammohaḥ pranaṣṭaste dhanañjaya,* 'has your delusion caused by ignorance been destroyed now?' This is the last statement of Śri Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā.* Now, Arjuna is answering—a beautiful answer.

अर्जुन उवाच –

Arjuna uvāca—

'Arjuna said:'

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत।
स्थितोऽस्मि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं तव॥७३॥

Naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtirlabdhā tvat prasādāt mayācyuta;
Sthito'smi gatasandehaḥ kariṣye vacanam tava — 18. 73

'Destroyed is my delusion, and I have gained my memory through Your grace, O Acyuta (Kṛṣṇa). I am firm; my doubts are gone. I will do Your word.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa had earlier told Arjuna, 'I have told you the highest philosophy. Now decide for yourself.' *Yathecchasi tathā kuru,* 'whatever you think proper, that you do.' Śrī Kṛṣṇa had given Arjuna full freedom. Arjuna is now telling, *naṣṭo mohaḥ,* 'my delusion has vanished'; *smṛtirlabdhā,* 'my memory has become steady'. In delusion we lose memory. When memory becomes steady, delusion goes away. *Tvat prasādāt mayācyuta,* 'through Your Grace, O Kṛṣṇa', all my delusion has been destroyed by Your teaching. *Sthito'smi,* 'I am now steady'; I have a

steady mind now. The *sthita* idea has been repeated again and again. At the end of the second chapter we had a whole exposition of a *sthitaprajña,* 'a person of steady wisdom'. What a wonderful idea that this human mind, which is so unsteady, can be steadied. We have to train it in that steadiness. That is how men and women develop their given psychic energy system to develop a highly illumined steady *buddhi,* that wonderful mind, that enlightened reason. That is what we saw at the end of the second chapter. *Gatasandehaḥ,* 'my doubts are gone'; *sandehaḥ* means 'doubt', and *gata* means 'gone'; finally, *kariṣye vacanam tava,* 'I shall do what You have asked me to do.' I have no other judgement now. I am fully satisfied. Śrī Kṛṣṇa had told him, *uttiṣṭha,* 'stand up', face up to the situation around you. That is what He had said in the very beginning of the second chapter. Why this weakness, why this chicken-heartedness in this difficult situation? Throw away all this unworthy, unbecoming attitudes. Stand up! Face up to your problems. That is the great message coming from the beginning of the second chapter. To make Arjuna understand it and follow it, all these teachings were needed.

And so, we seek philosophy in order to give us guidance in our day-to-day life. This philosophy of life is very important. It does not mean any academic philosophy. Not at all. *Philosophy is something by which we put our little actions of life in the context of a profound thought*, a profound idea, a profound ideal; we put all of them together; then we get a philosophy to guide our life and action. It is good to have such an ideal, perfect or imperfect, it does not matter. 'A man with an ideal may commit hundred mistakes, but a man without an ideal will commit a thousand mistakes,' said Swami Vivekananda. So, we have to keep some ideology, some philosophy, with us. We have to make it as perfect as possible. Arjuna had a Kṛṣṇa to give him the best of philosophy. We may take the help of this same teaching, and thus frame each one's own philosophy in life, and correct it whenever we find better wisdom coming to us. But we *should have* a philosophy by which we can live and act. We should not live an ad-hoc day-to-day life. That is very dull; there is no creativity in it. That is the concept of philosophy so far as human life is concerned. We should have a philosophy of life. We resort to philosophy to resolve our doubts. Lots of doubts come when we actually begin to live. A baby has no doubts. Slowly,

as it grows, problems come, doubts come, difficulties come. Then it seeks knowledge, and more precise knowledge. And the wider the sphere of knowledge, the better a baby will be able to live. In this way, we can see human development going on from birth throughout life. The whole of experience is there to open up new avenues of thinking for us, provided the mind is active. If the mind becomes dead, we do the same thing again and again; nothing new will come to us. We should not be dead mentally speaking. We have to be fresh in our mind. That is a wonderful idea.

Many people become dead mentally, sometimes very early in life. After a person becomes a householder with one or two children, we find that his or her mind has become dead. No further growth takes place. The remaining thirty or forty years of life is only static life; nothing new. Mind must be alive, creative; a zest must be there in the mind. That is the best thing we can do. Body gets older and it may die away. But why should the mind do likewise? I shall keep it fresh, steady. It is there that *thoughtfulness* comes. That is the real meaning of the word, *manuṣya*. Sri Ramakrishna used to play on the word, *mānuṣ; man huṣ* is *mānuṣ*. *Jiskā huṣ man mein hai, vaḥ mānuṣ hai. Jiskā huṣ khāli śarīr mein hai, peṭ mein hai, vaḥ to mānuṣ nahīm hai.* One whose mind is alert, creative, he or she is a human being. But, one whose mind is in the body and in the belly, he or she is not a human being. That is an animal in every sense of the term.

So, in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* that greatest book of *bhakti,* there is the story of a little five-year old boy, Prahlāda, a great devotee. He is addressing his fellow-students in the school when the teacher is away. There he says:

Kaumāra ācaret prājño dharmān bhāgavatān iha;
Durlabham mānuṣam deham tadapi adhruvam arthadam —

What a beautiful sentence coming from a book about two thousand years ago! And it looks very fresh even today. This little boy says, *kaumāra ācaret prājño dharmān bhāgavatān iha,* 'in this life, in this world, *iha,* let us practise the *bhāgavata dharmas* from our childhood itself, *kaumāra,* when we are young, i.e. below twelve years of age'. What are the *bhāgavata dharmas?* That infinite Atman is my true nature. That Divine is the nature of all others as well. We are all one in the Divine that is within.

So, we should practise love, compassion, spirit of service, and not aggression, not violence, not destroying other people. That is called *bhāgavata dharma* which is expounded in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and also in the *Gītā*. So, we have to begin this way of life when we are young, when there is plenty of energy. We have to do it here, *iha,* 'in this world', in society, in this body. Why?, because *durlabham mānuṣam deham*, 'it is very rare to get a human body'; and even if you get it, it is not going to stay for all the time. It may go any moment. A sense of urgency comes. That is the importance that Prahlāda attaches to it. Among so many species in the world, the human species is only about 4000 million; whereas one species of insect alone may be 4000 million. So, human life is very rare. Having got it, we should not think it is going to last for ever. Any moment it may go. *Tadapi adhruvam,* 'it is not steady'; but, *arthadam,* when put to good use, 'it will give the best of results'. The greatest blessing will come to us, if we put this life to good use.

Therefore, Prahlāda says, young days are the days when we need to have a philosophy. Try to live according to it, ill or well, does not matter. We can correct ourselves. Mistakes are not going to trouble us, should not trouble us. That is one of the troubles with our people. Our people think, 'If I do that, I will commit a mistake. Therefore, the best thing for me is to keep quiet!' Our erstwhile philosophy has been always a 'keep quiet philosophy'. *That is wrong.* It is better to do, and if some criticism comes, we have to take them and study them; correct ourself if we are wrong; if not, ignore the criticism. That is all. But it is better to do something we consider good. That conclusion must come. Why should we not do at all and lead a lazy life? That should not be. So, we have to do, and correct ourself. Therefore, Prahlāda says *arthadam,* we will 'get great benefit' out of that effort. In this very life, we will feel that we have achieved what ought to be achieved being born as a human being. I have lifted my life from the organic level to a higher level. I can see my oneness with all. I feel happy when others are happy. I feel suffering when others are suffering. I have broken away from my isolation, from that limitation of the organic system. Now, *that is the spiritual growth and expansion of the human personality*. This can be achieved here and now—feeling oneness with all. What a beautiful idea! Why should we remain in this prison of the organic

system? The body is a good instrument, a good servant, but a bad master. If the body becomes our master, we never grow beyond the animal level. Let us make the body our servant. Something else is there in us to grow. All this will come to us when we begin to seek for a philosophy of life like this *Gītā*. When doubts come, we will turn to that philosophy. Let us see how that works. So, we read other books, read other's experiences also. We ask that question: how did that other person face this problem? It is very good: *mahājano yen gataḥ sa panthā*—it is a beautiful expression in the scriptures. What is the way?, 'the way trodden by great minds'; we can also tread that path. So, we have examples before us to guide us. When a mind is alive and active, it takes in nourishment from every experience. But it must be a live mind. If a plant is alive, it will take nourishment from the soil and the air. If it is dead, it doesn't take anything. A human mind is just the same. So, Arjuna is telling what is the function of philosophy—to remove doubts and confusion, to give us a definite line of action. That is what philosophy does to us. It does not do anything more. It is a light to show us the path. The rest is our own movement. Wherefrom comes this light?, from our own inner Self; with that we start on our journey. We then go on, and on. Whenever doubts come, we turn to this philosophy. Like a lamp we hold it to find our way through a thicket, through a difficult path. Arjuna had that experience. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has presented him with a philosophy of life; remember it is not a philosophy *after* life.

So, *naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtirlabdhā tvat prasādāt mayācyuta.* A great teacher gives a great discourse. Students receive it, get a great blessing out of it; their doubts are removed. How much we respect such a teacher! He or she has given us the greatest gift—knowledge itself. Knowledge is the greatest gift according to all our literature. *If a person wants to give a small packet of money or knowledge, a good person will choose knowledge and not money. Money comes and goes; tomorrow it will all be finished. Knowledge will make us live a better and a still better life. Knowledge is more important than getting a small amount of money.* 'Knowledge is the supreme wealth', according to a Sanskrit verse: *vidyā dhanam sarvadhana pradhānam*. So, no amount of wealth can equal the wealth of knowledge, the wealth of wisdom. That is what Arjuna got from Śrī Kṛṣṇa—wisdom:

how to conduct oneself in this difficult situation, how to negotiate one's life through all these difficult situations.

So, *sthito'smi gatasandehaḥ kariṣye vacanam tava,* 'I am steady and my doubts are gone, and I shall follow what line you have chosen for me.' I fully accept it with understanding and not merely because you said so. I understand, and therefore I follow your direction. Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not want a mere mute follower. He wants intelligent followers. The greater the teacher, the greater is the freedom given to the student to think for oneself. The smaller the teacher, the less that freedom. We have then to follow simply what the teacher tells us. Sri Ramakrishna compares teachers to certain types of snakes: water snake and the cobra. He says in the *Gospel* (p. 168, 1996 edition), 'One day as I was passing the Panchavati on my way to the pine-grove, I heard a bullfrog croaking. I thought it must have been seized by a snake. After some time, as I was coming back, I could still hear its terrified croaking. I looked to see what was the matter, and found that a water-snake had seized it. The snake could neither swallow it nor give it up. So there was no end to the frog's suffering'. Similar is the case of a *guru* and a disciple if the disciple is quite intelligent, quite strong, and the *guru* very ordinary. That *guru* has caught hold of such a disciple, and both will be in trouble. Then he said, 'I thought that had it been seized by a cobra it would have been silenced after three croaks at the most'. All problems would have been solved. That is the nature of a *guru* who gives us freedom to live according to our own understanding in the light of the knowledge we have gained. That is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa was. That is what Śaṅkarācārya was. That is what Sri Ramakrishna was. What tremendous freedom comes to us along with the spiritual teaching! Freedom is essential for human growth. Vedanta constantly emphasizes that point. In his lecture in Madras in 1897, Swami Vivekananda said, 'Freedom is the first condition of growth.' (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol 2, p. 115; 3, p. 246; 4, p. 346, 367; 5, p. 23, 47). Take away freedom, and human growth cannot be there at all. That is the language of Vedanta.

Having said this, the actual dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna ends here. In the remaining verses neither Arjuna nor Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks. But the man who reported all this, Sañjaya, has something to say. And the *Gītā* ends

with those few verses uttered by Sañjaya. We saw this Sañjaya coming into the picture when we studied the first chapter of the *Gītā.*

Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the blind king, was sitting in the palace in Hastināpura, near Delhi. About 100 miles away, the Kurukṣetra war was about to begin. This blind king wanted to know what was going on in the battlefield. The great sage Vyāsa comes on the scene and gives to Sañjaya the power to visualise what was going on in Kurukṣetra though he was sitting in Hastināpura before the blind king. This *divyadṛṣṭi* was given to Sañjaya. So, he could see without any modern television; purely from mind alone he could manage to give that kind of a reporting. And the whole thing is a report by Sañjaya. So, the book began with Dhṛtarāṣṭra's question: 'What happened on the battlefield, O Sañjaya? What happened to the war between my children and the Pāṇḍavas?' And he never questions any more. Then Sañjaya answers. Now in the concluding portion, Sañjaya tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the palace what he wanted to say—something very beautiful! He goes into ecstasy in these concluding remarks.

सञ्जय उवाच —

Sañjaya uvāca—

'Sañjaya said:'

इत्यहं वासुदेवस्य पार्थस्य च महात्मनः।
संवादमिममश्रौषमद्भुतं रोमर्ह्षणम्॥७४॥

Ityaham vāsudevasya pārthasya ca mahātmanaḥ;
Samvādam imam aśrauṣam adbhutam romaharṣaṇam—18. 74

'Thus have I heard this wonderful dialogue between Vāsudeva (Kṛṣṇa) and the high-souled Pārtha (Arjuna), causing my hair to stand on end.'

Ityaham vāsudevasya pārthasya ca mahātmanaḥ; samvādam imam aśrauṣam, 'Thus have I heard the conversation between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the great souled Arjuna'. *Mahātmanaḥ* means 'great-souled'; Arjuna was a great-souled person. *Imam,* 'this'; *samvādam* means 'conversation', dialogue; *aśrauṣam,* 'I have heard'. What kind of conversation?, *adbhutam,* 'a wonderful dialogue'; *romaharṣaṇam,* 'giving horripilation in the body'

as the result of hearing all this. One feels such an amount of joy that one's hairs stand on end. This is the first remark of Sañjaya. He goes further on in this mood.

व्यासप्रसादाच्छ्रुतवानेतद् गुह्यमहं परम्।
योगं योगेश्वरात्कृष्णात्साक्षात्कथयतः स्वयम्॥७५॥

Vyāsaprasādāt śrutavān imam guhyam aham param;
Yogam yogeśvarāt kṛṣṇāt sākṣāt kathayataḥ svayam—18. 75

'Through the grace of Vyāsa have I heard this supreme and most profound *yoga,* directly from Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of *yoga*, Himself declaring it.'

Vyāsaprasādāt śrutavān aham, 'through the grace of Vyāsa I could get this opportunity to listen' to this tremendous dialogue. Vyāsa gave Sañjaya the power to sit in the palace at Hastināpura and see and report what was going on currently in the field of Kurukṣetra over a hundred miles away. *Imam guhyam param,* 'this supremely profound'; what was it that he heard?, *yogam,* 'that great philosophy of *yoga*'. What did Śrī Kṛṣṇa teach Arjuna?, the philosophy of *yoga.* The whole message of these eighteen chapters is conveyed in that one simple word, *yogam.* That is why it is a rich word, though most people understand by that word only physical exercise or magic and miracle. They do not know what a tremendous dimension *yoga* really has. In the *Gītā* we get that wonderful spiritual and philosophical dimension of the teaching of *yoga,* and people are eager for it. I have seen people beginning with exercise. They do not know whether there is something still higher. When they hear it, they are very much fascinated.

In 1970, when I was staying in a Geneva hotel on my way to USA on an American tour organized by the Temple of Understanding, New York, Dr. Rama Polderman of Holland, a great lover of India and who had met me in India earlier, with his friends, met me in the hotel and requested me to visit Holland on a lecture tour and speak to them about Yoga; they had already started a Yoga group called in Dutch, Stichting Yoga Netherlands. I said: I shall come, not this year, but next year, i.e. 1971. I also said that I do not speak on Yoga as physical exercise in which they were engaged in then, but

on the spiritual and philosophical dimension of Yoga known as Vedanta. They replied: 'That is exactly what we want'. They left and I went to America.

Accordingly, in 1971, they sent me my airfare and I reached Holland and spent three weeks lecturing at various towns, including the Amsterdam University, for the first two weeks. In the last week, Dr. Rama and his friends had arranged a Vedanta retreat in a hotel with an accommodation for sixty members in a village called Oosterbeek. The entire hotel had been taken for the retreat. It was near the eastern town of Arnehm. Ooster in Dutch means east, beek means river. That is the Rhine river to the west of Germany.

The audience consisted of about sixty men, women, boys and girls, a cross section of Holland's population—professors, doctors, youths, and housewives. I gave lectures, forenoon and afternoon, on the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*, with regular study; they had the required books with them; it was followed by stimulating question-answer sessions for an hour or more. I have no language to describe the joy that they, and also I, experienced during that one week. There was also a good sale of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and Vedanta books.

On the evening of the seventh day, there was a farewell session. Two of them rose to speak to thank me; emotion overtook them and they ended by saying, 'We have no words to thank you for the precious ideas and ideals you have given us.'

Sañjaya is not telling anything extraordinary when he said what he felt as he heard this wonderful message of *yoga*, *yogeśvarāt kṛṣṇāt sākṣāt kathayataḥ svayam*, 'spoken by that *yogeśvara*, the Master of *yoga*, that is Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself'; 'He conveyed this message to Arjuna, and *I got the opportunity to listen to it'*. Sañjaya's experience is repeated in hundreds of cases in the modern world, in India as well as abroad—more abroad than here in India, because to us everything is familiar, and so everything is meaningless. That is our condition! Whereas, in the West everything is fresh. They are *in search of it.* We are not in search yet. *A valuable thing has value when we search for it.* If it comes to us without searching, it has

no value. A picture of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is there in our house, the book of *Gītā* is also there on the shelf, and so we need nothing further!

Here, in this verse, it is said, *sākṣāt Bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke about this *yoga*, and I, Sañjaya, listened to it. What a wonderful experience it must have been! And in the next verse he goes one step higher in narrating his experiences—experience of still greater joy.

राजन्संस्मृत्य संस्मृत्य संवादमिममद्भुतम्।
केशवार्जुनयोः पुण्यं हृष्यामि च मुहुर्मुहुः॥७६॥

Rājan samsmṛtya samsmṛtya samvādam imam adbhutam;
Keśavārjunayoḥ puṇyam hṛṣyāmi ca muhurmuhuḥ—18. 76

'O King, as I repeatedly remember this wonderful and holy dialogue between Keśava (Kṛṣṇa) and Arjuna, I rejoice again and again.'

Addressing Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Sañjaya says: *rājan,* 'O King'; *samsmṛtya samsmṛtya,* 'remembering again and again'; remembering what?, *imam adbhutam puṇyam samvādam,* 'this wonderful and holy dialogue'; *keśava arjunayoḥ,* 'between Keśava or Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna'; *hṛṣyāmi ca muhurmuhuḥ,* 'I rejoice again and again'.

Repetition it is, of an actual experience. And exactly this happened to a German youth in Berlin. After the lecture as I was going down, he came to me with such tremendous feeling, looking at my face, 'Swamiji, you said something wonderful today. I have never heard it in my whole lifetime.' What is that?, 'a spark of the Divine is there in every human being'—the central teaching of Vedanta. 'I have never heard it. But, when I heard it, I found it wonderful. I am very much captivated by that teaching. I want to know more.' And that is why he was looking at me. How can I forget that face? That face is just the expression of Sañjaya's experience here. First about the dialogue: 'I heard this wonderful teaching, and I am enjoying it again and again.' 'Again and again' is the expression used here. In the next verse, Sañjaya refers then to his experience in the eleventh chapter, when he saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *viśvarūpa.*

तच्च संस्मृत्य संस्मृत्य रूपमत्यद्भुतं हरेः।
विस्मयो मे महान् राजन् हृष्यामि च पुनः पुनः॥७७॥

Tacca samsmṛtya samsmṛtya rūpam atyadbhutam hareḥ;
Vismayo me mahān rājan hṛṣyāmi ca punaḥ punaḥ —18. 77

'And as I remember and remember that most wonderful Form of Hari, great is my wonder, O King; and I rejoice again and again.'

I saw that wonderful Form of the Divine, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, at that time. What did he feel about this Divine Form? *Tacca samsmṛtya samsmṛtya,* 'when I remember it again and again'; *rūpam atyadbhutam hareḥ,* 'Hari's (Śrī Kṛṣṇa's) extraordinary Form'; that Divine Form, that *viśvarūpa* Form, which has inspired many people even in modern times. As I have referred to in the eleventh chapter, when Openheimer, the famous nuclear scientist, witnessed the testing of the first atom bomb in a desert of America, and saw that big flame of fire going up high, he remembered only that verse 12 of the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā:*

Divi sūryasahasrasya bhavet yugapadutthitā;
Yadi bhāḥ sadṛśī sā syād bhāsastasya mahātmanaḥ —

'If a thousand suns were to rise on the eastern sky at the same time, that glow will be nothing compared to the glow of this Divine Form'. He saw the same thing there. What a tremendous condition it will be if a thousand suns were to rise at the same time!

Vismayo me mahān, 'my wonder is extraordinary'*,* great is my wonder*;* and, *hṛṣyāmi ca punaḥ punaḥ,* 'I am full of joy and am experiencing it again and again'. One scene that we can never forget is Divine Experience. Having said this from experience, Sañjaya is giving a conclusion. He is giving, in the next verse, an estimate of the blessings that will come to a person, society or nation, if this *Gītā* teaching, the *yoga* of the *Gītā,* is understood and implemented by that person, society, or nation. I like this verse immensely and that is the closing verse of the *Gītā*.

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः।
तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिर्ध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम॥७८॥

Yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārtho dhanurdharaḥ;
Tatra śrīrvijayo bhūtirdhruvā nītirmatirmama — 18. 78

'Wherever is Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of *yoga,* wherever is Pārtha, the wielder of the bow, there are prosperity, victory, welfare, and constant justice; such is my conviction.'

Yatra, 'where'; there is *yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇa,* 'Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Master of *yoga*'; *yatra pārtho dhanurdharaḥ,* 'where there is Arjuna, the wielder of the bow'; Arjuna was a great archer and had a bow in his hand. That means he was a man of action. Literally, this means a tremendous heroic man of action. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa, a great calm personality, full of wisdom within, full of compassion for humanity, and He is the great teacher. *Tatra,* 'in that place', in that family, in that society, in that nation; what blessing shall we find?, *śrī,* 'prosperity'. What is the opposite of *śrī?,* poverty, dismal conditions of life—all these are called the *a-śrī.* Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'in every house, in the front, a light must be burning'. That is the indication of *śrī* in the house. If there is no burning light there, then it is *a-śrī.* So, generally, in our houses we keep a lamp burning. We keep at least a small wick-lamp burning. So, *śrī* is the first blessing that will come from the combination of energies of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in a character, in a society, in a nation. Then comes the second blessing.

Vijayo, 'success'; we should do some work, take up some undertaking. Then we will succeed in it. Otherwise, if this energy is not there, we go on doing something or the other; and there is failure, repeated failure. But this energy combination makes for success and repeated success.

Third blessing is *bhūti,* 'welfare'; there will be welfare everywhere. Fourth blessing is *dhruvā nītiḥ,* 'constant justice and righteousness' in society. So, *śrīḥ, vijayaḥ, bhūtiḥ,* and *dhruvā nītiḥ*—four things are mentioned here—economic prosperity, success in all undertakings, a high concept of state welfare, and finally, ethical sense, moral awareness.

When I was a student, we could keep all the books, instrument boxes, etc., on the table and go away. When we came back in the evening, these would still be there. Today, in five minutes, everything will be gone! Something is wrong in the social system. That *dharma* element is gone.

Everything else is there. A concern for others, a respect for oneself, a sense of honour, we have lost. Why? Love of money. *Exclusive love of money can destroy every virtue in a human being*. That is what is afflicting Indian society now. The whole thing will be reversed when a fraction of this *yoga* inspires the people of this country. Just a fraction will do. And Śrī Kṛṣṇa said this in the second chapter. When He began this discourse on *yoga*, He said, *svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt,* 'even a little of this *dharma* will save us from great fear'. It is not all or nothing. Even a little is good. That is the idea.

So, Sañjaya says, economic prosperity, success in all undertakings, that high concept of state welfare, and finally, ethical sense, moral awareness, constant justice and righteousness in society will be the result.

In recent times, after independence, the greatest loss has been the destruction of justice in society. Injustice rules supreme at every level of society in India today. Law is there; courts are there; judgements are there. But law and justice have become so far apart. A thing is lawful, but not just, because law can be purchased with money; justice cannot be purchased with money. Our people must realize this truth. A society is progressive where law and justice coincide. Whatever is judged as correct by the court, is also just from every point of view. How does that come? When we ask that question, we get the answer in the word *dharma.* Wherever there is *dharma,* law becomes coincidental with justice. Wherever there is no *dharma,* law goes its own way and justice goes its own separate way.

In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* we find a beautiful passage. This value called *dharma* was introduced into human personality by the Projector of the universe Himself. *Dharma* is embedded in everyone of us. What is the importance of *dharma?* Why *dharma?*, because the weak become equal to the strong. That is the meaning of *dharma.* See the definition. Normally, the weak is weak; the strong is strong. But when *dharma* comes in, the weak becomes equal to the strong. What a beautiful idea! That strong person says to the weak, yes, I cannot do this against you. I am debarred from doing this because of *dharma*, this sense of justice. Therefore, an ordinary person can file a suit against the government, and *win* in that suit. Government is all powerful. How does the weak win?,

because of *dharma.* If *dharma* is not there, the weak can never win. Only the strong will win. The moneyed will win. But, if *dharma* is there, no such thing will take place. The weak and the strong become equal only when there is *dharma.* That *dharma,* if it goes away from society, justice becomes a sham, law becomes a sham. And we are passing through that stage now; but let us hope it will soon change for the better.

The energies of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and of Arjuna must combine together in a society. What are these energies? Ordinarily we can say, the energy of vision, and the energy of action. These two must go together. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was never the man of action in the *Mahābhārata* war. He was only the driver of the chariot. He never took part in the war. In the beginning, at the time of the preparation for war, we find Duryodhana and Arjuna both approach Śrī Kṛṣṇa for His help. Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, 'I can give you lot of armies or I can give you Myself. Which do you want?' Duryodhana said, 'I want the armies, I don't want You'. So, he took away Kṛṣṇa's army. Arjuna said, 'I don't want the army, I want only You. Be my charioteer. Don't fight at all in the war'. That was Śrī Kṛṣṇa's status in the *Mahābhārata* war. He was only guiding Arjuna. So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Man of vision, of farsight and foresight, combined with the tremendous energy of implementation in Arjuna, the man of action, the hero of action, ensures, in any nation, these blessings: *śrīḥ, vijayaḥ, bhūtiḥ,* and *dhruvā nītiḥ.* That is the message of the *Gītā* to humanity.

Let these go together; then only greatness will come. Merely by weeping and wailing, no greatness will come to a nation. We have been a weeping, wailing nation for centuries together. For everything there is a weeping. Even in joy, we start weeping. Swami Vivekananda therefore said, 'this is not the time to weep even in joy. We have wept long enough. No more weeping now, but stand on your feet and be men.' That is the language in Swamiji's literature—a passage which inspired President Sukarno of Indonesia. He wrote it in an introduction to a book on Vivekananda's teachings in Indonesian language, *Svara Vivekananda*, the release of which took place when I had gone to Jakarta for an hour to the Presidential palace. He liked that particular passage very much, and in his foreword to the book, he wrote:

‘We have wept long enough. No more weeping now. Stand on your feet and be men. Yours, Sukarno.’

And so, when this wonderful message will come to us, our tears will be converted into irrigation for the good of society. Sorrow, and suffering, all these are there. Why go on wasting that sorrow? Channelise it for the good of the people. That is the new message of the *Gītā* and of Swami Vivekananda coming to all of us. So, here is that wonderful combination of two energy resources, vision and action, thinking and implementation. They must go together. Meditation and work, they must go together. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna combining in our system to create a new human being in India. And millions of such people will create a healthy transformation in our human society. *And today, such a transformation cannot be only national; it will also be international and human*. Day by day, we are going to that international context of human relations. No more is there a provincial, tribal or national relation. So, this teaching has reference to the whole of humanity today, seeking for a peaceful international order where human beings can rise to the highest level of human development. Our philosophy of human possibilities will be there to help us to bring out the infinite possibilities within us, *and Vedanta’s wonderful aspect is that it is the science of human possibilities.* Vedanta says infinite possibilities are hidden within each one of us. Life must be lived in such a way that we bring out these possibilities. Vedanta stands as a sponsor to us in this achievement. That is the message conveyed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna and the name of that message is the simplest in philosophy—*yoga.* What did Śrī Kṛṣṇa teach Arjuna?, *yoga.* In the second chapter of the *Gītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa introduced for the first time this philosophy of *yoga,* and here too, in the last chapter, Sañjaya talks about *yoga* spoken verily by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Master of *yoga.* As I repeat in these Sunday lectures, now and then, if we make a hell around us, *we* are responsible; if we make a heaven around us, we alone are responsible. We have the capacity to do that; it is up to us to be the instrument of creating heaven around us in this society of ours. Our people must take that decision. Our politics, our economics, agriculture, industry, administration, business—all must be geared to that one aim. How to convert India into a heaven for all its people and not make it a hell, as it is today, by our own mistake, our own small mindedness, our own pettiness.

That petty person must go. A large personality must emerge. And a human being is essentially large because he or she is the infinite Atman. He or she is not a tiny organic system. That is how Vedanta sends out this tremendous message of hope and assurance to all humanity. And while giving out this message, it is also giving a blessing, 'arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached': (*Katha Upaniṣad*, I. iii. 14)

Uttiṣṭata jāgrata
prāpya varān nibodhata;
Kṣurasya dhāra niśitā duratyayā
durgam pathastat kavayo vadanti —

The third line says, 'Walking on the edge of a sharp razor', which is there to cut us to pieces any moment—that is the way of life. We have to boldly enter into that life and struggle, and face it with a heroic attitude; great things will then come. Those who struggle, they will get. Those who do not struggle, they won't get.

In the early part of the Veda, *Yajur Veda,* there is a beautiful statement. 'Those who move on, they achieve the best. Those who stay put, they achieve nothing.' So, 'move on, move on, move on'. You find the dynamics of life there—*caraiveti, caraiveti,* is the message: 'March on; march on; march on.' The sun is marching on; it is always active, so it is full of energy. So, the *Gītā* gives you this marching order. Like an army marching ahead when the whistle is given and bugle is sounded. We are in that state. People become an army, an army of the spirit, to conquer the citadel of truth. That is the marching order given by Vedanta. Swami Vivekananda used this expression, 'March on, march on, march on.' And remember that the *Gītā* was taught on a battlefield by a *great* hero to *another* hero. The whole thing is meant for heroic people, to create heroes out of clay. And all great teachers have done it. A Guru Gobind Singh did it three hundred years ago; he took ordinary people, and converted them into heroes. How did he do it?, by this philosophy—'There is *infinite* energy in you. Have faith in *yourself*. Have faith in *others* as well so that you don't destroy them by your strength. You make them better and still better. You make them a servant of humanity.'

What a beautiful concept! 'Be and make'; that shall be our motto. Swami Vivekananda said, 'be men yourself, and help others to become men.' That is Vedanta. That is the *Gītā.* And so, in these eighteen chapters, you have been given a profound exposition of the practical implications of Vedanta. When we began these *Gītā* lectures two years ago, as mentioned in my *Introduction* in the first volume, we first had four introductory lectures. The *Gītā's dhyāna ślokas* came in the beginning. Then came Śaṅkarācārya's two-page introduction. That took about two or three beautiful lectures. And we are today concluding with this note from Sañjaya, that where there is the spirit of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, i.e. vision, and the spirit of Arjuna, i.e. heroic action, in that society all these blessings will come. We want to convert the country and the world into a blessing for all humanity and for animals as well. When human beings are good, animals also will be happy. When human beings are wicked, animals also will suffer. Just like our poachers in our forests, seeking money by killing away elephants and birds, and the whole species getting wiped out thereby. That is going on today because the human being is a hopeless beast in every sense of the term. There is no compassion for other beings. All that will change. Not only human beings will benefit, but all living beings and nature will benefit from this philosophy—the sense of oneness with all, including nature around us, will come. That is the Advaitic vision, vision of non-duality, non-separateness. That is the Upaniṣads, that is the *Gītā*. This is what was propounded by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in its practical implications to Arjuna, and to all of us. The empire of the *Gītā* is expanding more and more, all over the world. That is the book we had the privilege to study during these nearly two years. And today, we come to the end of it.

Next time when we meet here, I hope to expound the source of the *Gītā* in the Upaniṣads, particularly two of the biggest and most powerful Upaniṣads, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāndogya Upaniṣads.* We will deal with all the beautiful passages from these books during our Sunday meetings here, because Swami Vivekananda wanted our nation to seek inspiration from the Upaniṣads. We can build up a new society, a new civilization, perfectly creative and intensely humanistic, based upon that philosophy of the Upaniṣads, a philosophy which speaks only of strength, human equality and service. No touch of weakness will you find, no touch

of fear will you find in the message of the Upaniṣads. So, Swami Vivekananda wanted our people to derive inspiration from these Upaniṣads. The more we study them, the better we shall be. We have already studied some of the Upaniṣads during the previous years—all these fourteen or fifteen years. But when we meet on the next occasion, I shall take up the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* for the first time.

इति मोक्षसंन्यास योगो नाम अष्टादशोऽध्यायः ।

Iti Mokṣa sannyāsa yogo nāma aṣṭāḍaśo'dhyāyaḥ —

'Thus ends the eighteenth chapter, designated *The Way of Liberation in Renunciation.'*